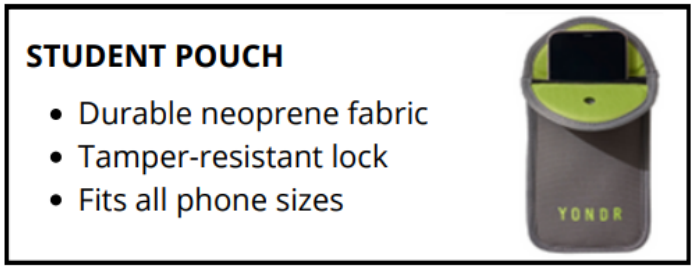
Phone-Free Abbeywood

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A phone-free school: What is the point of the school implementing this approach?
Increasingly, schools and society are recognising the downsides of young people being constantly contactable and having access to mobile technology with very few restrictions. There is now a well documented and growing body of evidence about the negative impact on young people's social, emotional and academic development. In the worst cases some young people are addicted to devices and there are real safeguarding issues. In addition, phones take a considerable amount of staff time to manage; they can cause conflict and distract all parties from the core purpose of learning.

Who are Yondr?
Yondr is a company that creates phone-free spaces for a variety of organisations including schools. They provide a simple solution that allows people to retain possession of their device whilst removing the distraction of it.

What are phone pouches?
Lockable phone pouches are a simple system whereby phones and smart watches are placed into a pouch, locked and then reopened by magnets. Schools have portable and fixed-point magnetic unlocking stations which will be available at the end of the school day. Pouches are now used in over 3,500 schools.



How do they work?
Students will turn off their phones and smart watches (any watch able to receive calls or connect to the internet) and place them in their pouch, as they enter the school site. They will lock the pouch by closing the flaps and pushing the lock button. Pouches will remain in the students' bags until the end of the school day. At the end of the day, students will simply tap their pouch against an unlocking magnet and press the button on the pouch to unlock it. Unlocking stations will be available across the school site.

What happens if I do not want to purchase a pouch – can my child still bring a phone to school?
No. All phones at school must be kept in a pouch. Where families do not support this approach, students will be expected to keep phones at home. The school will maintain records of students who have decided they will keep their phones at home.

My child has a basic phone (not a smartphone) - will this be covered by the policy? Yes. The policy applies to all devices and smart watches – the intention is to limit distractions from all phones and linked devices. At this point in time the policy does not cover earbuds/headphones etc.

What happens if a student is found with a phone outside of the pouch during the school day?
The first time a student breaches the rules they will be placed in the internal Reflection Room and their phone will be confiscated. It will be locked in the school office and parents will be asked to collect it. When collecting the phone, parents will be asked to sign a behaviour contract acknowledging that any further breaches of the phone policy will lead to a level 5 behaviour incident (being in possession of a banned item). On the second, and all subsequent occasions that a student breaches the rules, the school will retain the device until parents are able to collect it and the incident will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy. Where there are repeated incidents or refusal to hand in phones, further sanctions will apply. A level 5 incident is likely to result in fixed term suspension under the school's behaviour policy. This includes situations where we have been told that students will not be bringing phones into school, but choose to do so.

How will you ensure pupils are locking the phones in the pouches each day?
As part of our daily standing assembly (line-up) routine, students will show their tutor that their phone is switched off and placed in their Yondr pouch, before locking the

pouch. This will be managed by tutors as part of the normal everyday checking of essential equipment at line-up. In the early stages of the new policy, students will be regularly reminded by staff, to enable them to become accustomed to the new routine. Following this, there will be spot checks throughout the school day to ensure compliance.

My child needs their phone during the day – how will they access it?
If students have an underlying medical need where use of a mobile phone is required for monitoring software/apps (e.g. for diabetes regulation), the school will provide adapted medical pouches. These come with a velcro fastener. If students misuse this medical adjustment, the above process for confiscation and sanctions will apply.

If my child needs to leave before the end of the school day for a medical appointment or similar, how do they access their phone?
As per current policy, families need to contact the school office and attendance teams to communicate any non-standard arrival or departure times. Students will be able to lock and unlock devices at reception in addition to the normal times at the start and end of the day.

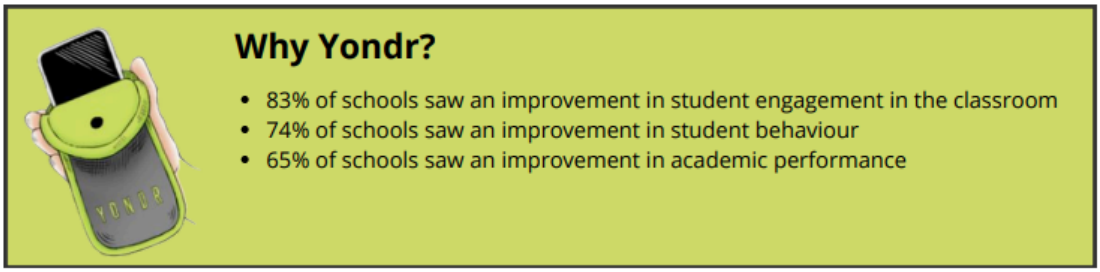
What if I need to contact my child during the day or they need to contact me?
We want our students to be engaged in their learning. If you need to contact your child during the school day, please contact the main office - 01454 862986. If a student needs to contact home, they should go to Student Reception as normal.

Will children have to queue at the start and end of the day to lock and unlock their pouches?
The locking and unlocking process is very quick and there will be enough unlocking stations around the site to enable students to do this quickly with minimal disruption at the end of their day. The school will review whether any further action is required (e.g. a staggered finish to the day to allow for efficient unlocking).

What happens if the pouch is damaged or lost - will I have to pay for another one?
Unless confiscated, students are in possession of their phone (in the pouch) for the entire school day. We advise students to store the pouch safely in their bags or lockers. The school accepts no responsibility for phones or pouches being damaged (which is the same as the current situation where students have their phone switched off and in their bag). Families will need to purchase replacement pouches at cost, or the child's phone will need to remain at home.

I have heard students can break into pouches – what happens if they do?
No system is 100% foolproof against deliberate damage or hack. Where a student deliberately breaches the policy, this will be treated in the same way other forms of defiance or non-compliance would be through the school's behaviour policy. In this situation, the phone would be treated as a banned item and this would be dealt with as a level five behaviour incident (resulting in a School Swap or a Fixed Term Suspension).

What if there is a school emergency?
School emergency procedures would be activated as normal and, as part of this, school leaders prioritise student and staff safety. Restrictions to accessing devices can ensure families are not unduly worried or given incorrect information.

How will students unlock their phones at the end of the day if they are offsite?
If students are off site at the end of the school day, they will have the opportunity to unlock pouches before leaving site. Alternatively, if appropriate, the member of staff leading a trip will take a portable unlocking station with them so that pouches can be unlocked at the end of the trip/activity (where students are not returning to ACS afterwards).

What about residential trips?
Trip leaders will review mobile device usage for all trips as part of their standard risk assessments and a decision will be made on whether pouches are to be used.