

Hodgson Academy



Phone Pouches Implementation Frequently Asked Questions

General Information: Why is the school introducing phone pouches?

The introduction of phone pouches supports our commitment to creating a calm, focused and distraction-free learning environment. It will reduce unnecessary distractions, improve face-to-face interaction, strengthen relationships and support students' wellbeing, while helping them develop important life skills such as organisation, responsibility and independence.

Are students still allowed to bring a mobile phone to school?

Yes. Students may continue to bring a mobile phone to school if they wish. The difference is that, from the official launch in the middle of September (date to be announced), all phones must be secured in the approved school phone pouch throughout the school day. Students who choose not to bring a phone to school do not require a pouch.

Is the pouch compulsory?

Yes. All students who bring a mobile phone onto the school site will be expected to use the approved school pouch. Failure to comply with this expectation will result in behaviour sanctions in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Purchasing the Phone Pouch

We are pleased to confirm that the ParentPay payment item is now live for families wishing to purchase their child's phone pouch. The contribution is £12 per pouch, which covers the cost of the pouch and the infrastructure required to operate the system across the school.

We would be grateful if parents and carers could make payment as soon as reasonably possible to allow us sufficient time to order, prepare and personalise pouches ahead of the September implementation. We appreciate that every family's circumstances are different. If the cost presents a

difficulty, please contact the school in confidence. We are committed to ensuring that no student is disadvantaged, and payment plans or financial support may be available where appropriate.

Daily Routine: What happens when students arrive at school?

As soon as students enter the school grounds, mobile phones should be **switched off (where possible), placed in their school bag and remain out of sight.**

During morning form time:

- Students remove their phone from their bag.
- Place it into their pouch.
- Lock the pouch.
- Staff complete visual checks to ensure every pouch is securely locked.

This will quickly become part of the normal morning routine.

Can students use their phone before school?

Yes. Students may use their phone **before entering the school site** if required. Once they enter the school grounds, phones must be put away until the morning pouch routine takes place.

Forgetting a Pouch: What happens if my child forgets their pouch?

Students who forget their pouch will be issued with an **Oops Pouch** for the day. Their phone must be secured in the temporary pouch before lessons begin.

Occasionally forgetting a pouch is understandable. However, repeated failure to bring a pouch will be treated in the same way as repeatedly forgetting other essential equipment and may lead to sanctions under the school's **Standards and Equipment Expectations**.

Unlocking the Pouch: How do students unlock their pouch?

Students unlock their own pouch using one of **over 25 unlocking touch points** positioned across the school's external exits. Students simply touch the pouch against the unlocking point as they leave school. The process takes only a second or two.

Following a detailed site survey with the provider, the number and location of unlocking points have been carefully planned to ensure students can leave quickly and efficiently. Schools significantly larger than Hodgson Academy successfully use the same system without end-of-day delays.

Will buses be delayed?

No. The unlocking system has been designed specifically to allow students to leave efficiently, including those travelling on school buses. The unlocking process is extremely quick and should not affect dismissal arrangements.

What happens after school clubs?

Students attending clubs, enrichment activities or fixtures will unlock their pouch when they leave school using the designated unlocking stations.

What if my child has a detention?

Students serving an after-school detention will keep their pouch locked until their detention has finished. They will then unlock their pouch before leaving the school site.

What if my child arrives late or leaves early?

Reception has handheld unlocking devices for students arriving late or leaving early for authorised appointments.

Emergencies & Medical Needs: Can my child access their phone during the school day?

In exceptional circumstances, yes. Reception or a member of the Pastoral Team can unlock a student's pouch if there is a genuine reason for them to access their phone. Students that require regular access to their phones for medical reason will be issued Velcro pouches for conditions such as diabetes.

Parents can continue contacting students through Reception in exactly the same way they do now. Reasonable adjustments will always be made where appropriate following discussion with parents and supporting medical evidence where required.

What if I need help paying?

We understand that every family's circumstances are different. If the cost presents a difficulty, please contact the school confidentially. Payment plans and financial support may be available where appropriate.

Will the pouch affect my phone's battery?

Possibly. Because the pouch blocks mobile signals, some phones may gradually lose battery as they continually search for a network connection throughout the day.

To reduce battery drain we recommend students:

- Arrive with a fully charged phone.
- Switch their phone **off** before locking it in the pouch where possible.

This helps preserve battery for the journey home.

What about smart watches?

We recognise that some smart watches can access the internet, receive messages and operate independently from a mobile phone. We are currently reviewing our approach to smart watches and will confirm our expectations before September.

What happens if a student refuses to use the pouch?

Refusal to follow staff instructions or school expectations will result in behaviour sanctions in accordance with the Behaviour Policy changes from September. Persistent refusal may result in escalating consequences.

What happens if a student is found using their phone?

Students found using or attempting to use a mobile phone during the school day without authorisation will receive behaviour sanctions.

What happens if a student deliberately damages or tries to force open a pouch?

Any attempt to tamper with, damage or force open a pouch will be treated seriously. Such behaviour may result in disciplinary sanctions and families may be required to pay for replacement equipment where damage is deliberate.

What if the pouch is lost or damaged?

The school will keep spare pouches available. Where a pouch has been deliberately damaged, lost through negligence or cannot be returned, families may be asked to purchase a replacement.

Can the school search for a phone?

Yes. Where staff have reasonable grounds to believe a student has an unsecured mobile phone or another prohibited digital device, the school may carry out a search in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and current statutory guidance.

My child currently uses their phone to...

- Check their timetable
- Contact home for lunch money
- Ask parents to bring forgotten equipment
- Check the time
- Organise their day

We recognise many students currently rely on their phones for these tasks.

As part of becoming a phone-free school we will ensure students know their timetables and have access to timetable information where required. Parents are encouraged to ensure lunch accounts are topped up in advance, while Reception and the Pastoral Team will continue to support students in exceptional circumstances.

These changes are intended to help students develop important life skills including:

- Organisation
- Responsibility
- Independence
- Accountability
- Resilience

These are valuable habits that will support students throughout school and later life.

Will the pouches have students' names on?

Yes. Every pouch has a designated area where a student's name can be clearly written, making it easy to identify.

The pouches are designed to be stored in school bags throughout the day, as they are generally too large for blazer pockets. Schools already using this system report that lost pouches are extremely rare because they remain securely in students' bags.

Interestingly, we currently experience far more phones being misplaced after falling from blazer pockets than schools report losing pouches.

Educational Visits, Residentials and School Trips: Will the same rules apply on educational visits?

Yes. The expectation is that the same phone pouch arrangements will apply on educational visits, ensuring consistency between school and trips.

However, we recognise that educational visits vary considerably. On occasions where students are given supervised free time, or where access to a phone forms part of the educational experience or travel arrangements, the Academy will review phone access on a trip-by-trip basis.

Any decisions will always be made with safeguarding, supervision, educational purpose and the needs of the visit as the highest priorities. Trip leaders will determine when students may access their phones and when they should be secured again. Portable handheld unlocking devices are available, allowing staff to unlock and re-secure pouches safely during visits where appropriate.

Parents will always be informed of any arrangements before the visit takes place.

Why are we doing this?

This initiative is about far more than simply removing mobile phones. It is about creating a calmer school, reducing distractions, improving concentration, strengthening relationships and helping students enjoy their school day without constant digital interruptions.

At the same time, it encourages the development of valuable life skills including organisation, responsibility, independence and accountability—qualities that will benefit students well beyond their time at Hodgson Academy.

☆ Top Tips for Students

- ✓ **Charge your phone overnight** so it has enough battery for your journey home.
- ✓ **Consider switching your phone off** before locking it in the pouch to help preserve battery life.
- ✓ **Place your pouch straight into your school bag** after locking it to keep it safe throughout the day.
- ✓ **Bring your pouch every day**, just like your planner, PE kit or any other essential piece of school equipment.
- ✓ **Know your timetable** before arriving at school and check for any room changes during the day.
- ✓ **Arrive organised** with all the equipment you need, including pens, books, PE kit and any homework.
- ✓ **Ensure your lunch account is topped up** before coming to school to avoid needing to contact home during the day.
- ✓ **Use Reception or your Pastoral Team if you genuinely need help**—we are always here to support you.
- ✓ **Remember that your phone is safe with you** throughout the day. You still have possession of it; it's simply secured until the end of the school day.
- ✓ **Respect your pouch.** Avoid pulling, forcing or tampering with the locking mechanism, as this may damage the pouch and result in replacement costs.
- ✓ **Take responsibility for your own belongings.** Your pouch has your name on it and should remain in your school bag throughout the day.
- ✓ **Unlock your pouch as you leave school** using one of the designated unlocking stations before heading home.