



# FOREST SCHOOL

## Mobile Phone Policy and Yondr Guidelines

V 1.0

Approved (Date):	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Next review (Date):	June 2025
Owner (Name, Title):	Deputy Headteacher (Safeguarding) & DSL
Classification:	Non-Statutory

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- School Rules
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2024)
- DfE Mobile Phones in Schools – Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day (February 2024)

## 1. Introduction

Forest School is committed to creating a focused learning environment where pupils can thrive without distraction. Additionally, there are also specific statutory duties placed on schools regarding safeguarding and online safety. This policy supports these expectations, and specifically with regard to mobile phone use during school hours, aligned to **Department for Education (DfE) guidance**:

- [Mobile phones in schools: Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day](#)
- [Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (updated at least annually, current version September 2024)

For the purposes of this policy, the ‘School Day’ is defined as arrival on site until the end of timetabled lessons (16:00). In specific circumstances, and primarily for the purposes of sending/receiving messages to/from Parent/Carers, pupils can unlock their phones if they are remaining on site after timetabled lessons (i.e. in a supervised activity and/or in the Martin Centre)

**DfE Mobile Phones in Schools – Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day (February 2024):**

**Page 3:** ‘Every school has a duty to create an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so all pupils, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools is the presence of mobile phones. Today, by the age of 12, 97% of pupils own a mobile phone. Mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. One in three secondary school pupils report that mobile phones are used in most lessons without permission. This not only distracts the single pupil using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers’ efforts away from learning. We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom. We also owe it to our pupils to keep them safe at school. One in five pupils have experienced bullying online. By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where pupils are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices. This is why we are determined that all schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day – not only during lessons but break and lunchtimes as well’.

**Page 6:** 'All schools should have a behaviour policy which is aligned with the school's legal duties and standards relating to the welfare of children. This is essential in establishing and maintaining high standards of behaviour ensuring that teachers can deliver the curriculum and that the school is a calm and safe environment for all pupils and staff. As part of this policy, schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (for example the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime'.

### **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024:**

**KCSIE 2024 Paragraph 137:** 'The school or college should have a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology, which will also reflect the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content. Schools and colleges should carefully consider how this is managed on their premises and reflect this in their mobile and smart technology policy and their child protection policy'.

The aim of this policy is underpinned by the following key aims:

- (i) To reduce/eliminate the use of personal data on the school site. Accessing the internet using personal data effectively allows pupils to bypass Forest's filtering and monitoring software
- (ii) To reduce/eliminate the use of personal data (often unlimited) in tethering (or hot spots) (ie connecting a pupil's BYOD laptop to a mobile network). This cannot be filtered or monitored and therefore could result in significant distractions during lessons particularly as third party blocks applied on platforms, such as Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram, will not be effective
- (iii) To ensure the School meets its commitment and duty to keep pupils are safe on site (eliminating personal use of photos/videos/audio will support this)
- (iv) The School is increasingly concerned about the number of notifications that pupils receive in the course of the school day, and is aware (from conversations with Parents/Carers) that this is a concern shared both in a school and home context

**Prohibiting use of mobile phones throughout the school day is a central part of the School's strategy to address the risks associated with them, including negative impacts on concentration and mental health; the consequences of a loss of focus in lessons; classroom disruption; and the role mobile phones play in bullying and other safeguarding issues when misused.**

There are clear advantages associated with having a mobile phone-free school environment. Pupils are encouraged to view such an environment as desirable and valuable, enabling them to engage actively with the full programme of learning, co-curricular activities and the other many

opportunities the School offers. It should also encourage them to engage more fully with their peers.

Responsible mobile phone use, and the risks flowing from their misuse, form part of the online safety curriculum which supports pupils in using mobile phones appropriately and safely.

## 2. Expectations and Yondr Pouch Usage:

*Mobile phones are not to be used during school day and must be kept out of sight and hearing including during assemblies, tutor times, lessons, breaks, and after-school activities.*

### ➤ Lower School

Y7–8 will be required to place their mobile phones in a Yondr pouch on entering the School site. The pouches will be locked, preventing access to the phone until the end of the school day. Pupils must unlock their pouch, ready for use, by no later than 08:25 each morning. They will then secure their phone in the pouch under supervision in their tutor rooms. Any late arrivals must secure their phones at Reception. In exceptional circumstances, as determined by a member of staff, pupils may be granted temporary access to their phones for educational purposes or emergencies.

### ➤ Middle School

Initial onboarding to Yondr will be for Y7-Y8 prior to rolling out to the Middle School once a robust review of the initial implementation has taken place. In the meantime, Middle School pupils are not permitted to access their mobile phones without permission during the school day (08:30-16:00).

### ➤ Sixth Form Expectations

Sixth Form pupils are not permitted to access their mobile phones without permission during the school day (08:30-16:00). The only exception is that they may access their phones *inside* the Sixth Form Centre only. This *does not* include the Warden's Garden.

The Sixth Form is expected to set a positive example for the rest of the School by adhering to this policy. They should demonstrate responsible behaviour and encourage their peers to do the same.

## 3. Staff role

Staff will model appropriate behaviour by not using personal mobile phones for personal reasons during lesson times or in the presence of pupils, except for emergencies or educational/operational purposes.

#### **4. Parent/Carer role**

Parent/Carers play an important role in supporting the School's policy on prohibiting the use of mobile phones during the school day. They are also encouraged to discuss and reinforce the policy with their children at home, including raising the risks associated with mobile phone use and the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. If Parent/Carers need to contact their child during the school day (or if a pupil needs to contact their Parent/Carer), they should contact the Senior School Office and a message will be passed on, as appropriate.

#### **5. Medical Conditions and Reasonable Adjustments**

Parent/Carers should inform the relevant Head of Section if their child requires a mobile phone for medical reasons (e.g. diabetes) and an alternative Yondr Pouch will be provided.

Additionally, the School acknowledges that some pupils will require *occasional* access to their mobile phone during the day and reasonable adjustments and adaptations may be made in such circumstances. Examples could include pupils with certain medical conditions or SEND; pupils with caring responsibilities; other individual circumstances. The relevant Head of Section will assess these on a case by case basis once a request, made in writing, is received. Agreement to such adjustments does not exempt these pupils from all restrictions; they will be permitted use for a specified purpose only and at times and locations agreed with the Head of Section.

#### **6. Other devices**

From Year 6 all Forest pupils bring their own laptops to school to enable access to a wide variety of information technologies for educational purposes. It provides opportunities for pupils to not only develop important skills and knowledge, but a responsible, useful and creative approach to the digital world. BYOD laptops must be connected to the School Wi-Fi and pupils are not permitted to connect to any other network (e.g. via a SIM; VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) which our filtering and monitoring will identify). The BYOD laptop is the device that is used in most lessons and pupils are responsible for its general care. The laptop should be available, ready, and safe to use throughout every school day. The battery should be fully charged at the beginning of the school day, and pupils should bring their charger to school should it be required.

Smartwatches are permitted on site (this is currently under review) but examination regulations do not permit them being brought into an examination room.

#### **7. Offsite Activities during the school day, e.g. educational visit, fixtures etc.**

Pupils in Y7–8 must keep their mobile phones in the Yondr pouch until they return to School. Under specific circumstances, the visit lead may unlock the pouches (e.g. where, under supervision, it supports the educational purpose of a visit; where pupils are travelling home direct from the visit/fixture and the arrival time is significantly different to that which was previously communicated) These examples are a guide only.

## **8. Offsite Activities outside of the school day**

The School recognises the benefits of pupils having limited access to their mobile phones when taking part in educational trips and visits (e.g. for educational purposes, taking photographs) and particularly for those visits which include elements of independent travel and remote and/or indirect supervision. However, pupils' educational experience should not be disrupted by mobile phones, and as such their use is restricted.

Pupils in Years Y7-8 are required to bring their Yondr pouches on residential visits and the arrangements – depending on the nature of the visit – will be fully communicated to pupils and Parent/Carers prior to departure. Specific details will also be included as part of the risk assessment process (eg phones may be locked each evening and then opened by the visit lead the next morning). In certain cases, where specific protocols pertain (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh expeditions), phones will remain in Yondr pouches for the duration of the visit.

When pupils are attending an event away from the School site which runs beyond the end of the school day (eg an away fixture), the visit lead may take a portable unlocking station or, at their discretion, pupils may be allowed to unlock their Yondr Pouches before leaving the school site. In the event of any emergency on a visit, pupils must inform a member of staff immediately.

## **9. Contacting pupils during the school day**

Parent/Carers who need to contact their children during the school day should email or call the Senior School Office ([office@forest.org.uk](mailto:office@forest.org.uk)) who will relay the message to the relevant pupil.

## **10. YONDR Pouches and unlocking stations**

Pupils in Y7–10 are assigned a personal, named, Yondr Pouch and it is their responsibility to bring it to school each day and keep it in good working condition.

On site unlocking stations, located near the White Gates, Reception and outside the Senior School Office, will remain locked during the school day (additional stations will be kept in the Senior School Office, the Pastoral Office, The Safeguarding Office, the Medical Centre, Learning Support, the Head of Lower School and the Head of Middle School).

## **11. Daily Process**

### *Start of the Day*

- Pupils must bring their Pouch to school with them each day.
- Pupils must unlock their pouches by 08.25 and go to their tutor rooms with their pouch in the unlocked position
- At registration, the tutor will ask each pupil to switch off their phone, put it in their unlocked Yondr pouch and lock the pouch. This will be done under supervision.
- The pupil keeps the pouch, containing the phone, on them for the day. It remains their responsibility, and, as the pouch is locked centrally, the phone cannot be accessed.

### *End of the day*

- Pupils must open their pouch at an unlocking station when leaving school using and remove their phone
- Pupils must lock their empty pouch (important to stop accidental damage/locking)
- Pupils must keep the pouch in their school bag overnight.

### *Late Arrival or Early departure*

Pupils arriving late or leaving early will pouch/un-pouch their phones at Reception before signing in/out.

## **12. Implementation**

Pouches will be checked regularly. Any attempt to breach this policy, e.g. using a decoy phone, attempting to place something else in the pouch, will result in a higher order sanction (specifically a Leadership Team Detention).

If a pupil is found in possession of a Yondr unlocking station, or a similar strength magnet used to unlock the pouches, this will be considered a serious offence and could lead to Temporary Exclusion. Sanctions will likely escalate for repeat offences.

### **Pouch Damage**

If a pupil deliberately damages the pouch, they will be given a replacement pouch at the cost of £25 which will be included in the following term's billing. It will also carry a Leadership Team detention.

#### *Examples of damage:*

- Ripped, cut and/or torn fabric
- Bent/cut pin
- Signs of force to black button on flap
- Damage to the black ball
- Pouch opens without unlocking station
- Graffiti/defacing the pouch

Sanctions will likely escalate for repeat offences.

### **Phone seen during the school day**

If a pupil is found in possession of a phone outside a Yondr pouch, it will be confiscated and held at the Senior School Office until the end of the day. Parent/Carers will be informed, and a Leadership Team Detention will be issued.

**Confiscation Disclaimer:** The School will take all reasonable care to safeguard confiscated mobile phones. However, the School accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to confiscated devices.

Sanctions will likely escalate for repeat offences.

**Forgotten Pouch**

If a pupil forgets their Pouch, they must report to the School Office where a temporary pouch for the day will be given. The pupil will then return to the School Office at the end of the day to unlock and return the temporary pouch.

**Lost Pouch**

If a pupil loses their pouch, they should notify the School Office immediately explaining the circumstances. The pouch will be replaced at no additional cost. If this is repeated, the charge will apply.

**Accidental Damage**

In the event of damage, the pupil should notify the School Office immediately explaining the circumstances. The pouch will be replaced at no additional cost.



## FAQs

### How does the system work for an individual pupil?

- Each pupil is issued with their own Yondr pouch.
- They must bring it to School with them each morning. Pupils must unlock their pouches by 08.25 and go to their tutor rooms with their pouch in the open position.
- At registration, the tutor will ask all pupils to switch off their phones, put them into the unlocked Yondr pouch and then lock it. This will be done under supervision.
- The pupil keeps the pouch containing the phone, with them for the day. It remains their responsibility but the phone cannot be accessed.
- At the end of the day, when leaving the School, pupils touch their pouches against an unlocking station, it opens and they have access to their phones. To prevent damage and accidental locking, pupils are expected to *lock the empty pouch* before they leave the School site and places into their school bag and until the following morning.

### How is pouch ownership identified?

- The pouches have a card insert with the name of the pupil, their House and year group. Pupils are not permitted to write or stick anything onto the pouch.

### What happens if a pupil forgets their pouch?

- They should report to the School Office upon arrival to obtain a temporary pouch.
- These pouches will be marked “TEMPORARY” and will be numbered. They must be returned to the School Office at the end of the day.

### What happens if a pouch is lost or accidentally damaged?

- Accidental damage is unlikely, given the sturdiness of the pouches.
- While unlikely, if proven accidental damage renders a pouch unusable, a new one will be issued free of charge.
- If a pupil deliberately damages a pouch (e.g. cuts it open) they are issued with a higher order sanction and charged for a replacement.
- If a pupil loses their pouch, they should notify the School immediately explaining the circumstances. The pouch will be replaced at no additional cost. If this is repeated, the charge will apply.

### What happens if a pupil leaves their phone turned on in a pouch and somebody calls it?

- The phone will ring as pouches do not block the signal.
- The pupil will be deemed to have failed to follow the instruction at the start of the day (which will have included the instruction to switch their phone off). Their pouch and phone will be confiscated and given to Reception (as is currently the procedure) and collected at the end of the day.
- The pupil is issued with a Lunchtime Reflection. The sanction will escalate if repeated.

### How are pupils prevented from accessing the unlocking stations during the day?

- Unlocking stations will be locked; they are accessible at specific times of the day only.

**What happens if a pupil forgets to unlock their phone at the end of the school day**

- The pupil will either wait until the following day to unlock or can choose to immediately return to School to access the unlocking stations (before 18:00)

**What happens where pupils arrive early for breakfast, EPP, Music Lessons etc?**

- They will follow the same procedure as if they were arriving at the standard arrival time

**What happens if a pupil needs to leave school early for reasons of sickness, an appointment, other?**

- There will be a supervised unlocking station available at Reception throughout the school day.

**What happens if a pupil arrives at School late, for example after an early appointment?**

- The pupil will unlock/lock their phone in their pouch when signing in at Reception.

**How will a large number of pupils be managed at unlocking stations at the end of the day?**

- The unlocking stations are quick, and there will be enough of them to allow for a steady flow of pupils. Yondr has assessed the number required to ensure smooth and easy access.

**What if a pupil does not have a mobile phone?**

- The School Office will confirm this with Parent/Carers and the relevant tutors will be notified

**What if a pupil says they did not bring their phone to school that day?**

- The School Office will confirm this with Parent/Carers. If the pupil is found to have misled the School, a sanction will be issued. Sanctions will escalate for repeat offences.

**Will smartwatches need to go in the pouch?**

- Smartwatches may be worn at School, but must not be used for sending, making, or receiving calls or messages.
- Smartwatches may not be worn during exams.

**What if a pupil brings in a decoy phone, purchases a magnet, purposefully damages the pouch or is seen to be undermining the rules which apply to mobile phone access?**

- Pupils will face serious sanctions as set out in this Policy. Higher order sanctions may apply in these cases, depending on the circumstances.