DURHAM JOHNSTON COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
DARE TO BE WISE

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1st October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: Update to the Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

Following my update in July, Durham Johnston Comprehensive School will be transitioning to a fully phone free environment for students in Years 7 to 11. This transition aligns with national guidance and reinforces our ongoing commitment to providing the best possible learning environment for all students.

The Department for Education has strengthened its expectations around mobile phone use in schools. Having reviewed these guidelines carefully within the context of our school, we are confident this change will support deep academic focus, encourage positive social interaction, and safeguard student wellbeing.

Year 10 will be the first year group to begin using mobile phone pouches. This will commence on **Tuesday 13th October**.

From this date, any Year 10 student who brings a mobile phone or smart device to school **must store it in a lockable pouch**.

The remaining year groups will follow on a phased basis over the subsequent weeks. Each year group will attend an assembly before their start date to ensure they are fully briefed on the procedures and expectations.

Pouches are available to purchase via ParentPay for £10.50. Thank you to those parents and carers who have already completed this purchase. Families eligible for pupil premium or those requiring financial assistance, are invited to contact us at **school@durhamjohnston.org.uk** with "Mobile Phone Pouches" as the email subject line.

Attached to this letter, you will find a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) alongside practical details regarding the rollout. Please review these documents carefully before contacting the school, as they are designed to address the majority of your questions.

We greatly appreciate your continued support as we implement this important change, ensuring our students can learn and socialise free from digital distractions.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs McFadden
Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

What happens if a student does not have a pouch?

They must hand their phone in at Reception at the start of the day.

The phone will be securely stored until 2:45 pm.

The student will be issued a collection card, which must be presented to collect their device.

Repeated failure to bring a pouch may result in parents/carers being required to come into school to collect the phone.

What if my child uses their phone for medical purposes?

A very small number of students use their mobile phone as part of a verified medical need (for example, to monitor a health condition or access a medical app). These arrangements will continue.

Students with an approved medical need will be issued with a different type of pouch. This pouch uses velcro rather than a lock, allowing the student to access their device when required.

Staff will be aware of which students have medical access arrangements as they will be issued a pass that they can keep in a section on the front of their pouch.

These arrangements will only be granted for students who have a known medical condition that has been shared with school.

If your child uses their phone for medical reasons and you have not informed school, please contact the school so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place before the rollout date.

What if my child does not own any mobile or smart devices?

If your child does not own a mobile of smart device, please **contact us by 3pm Thursday 9th October** at school@durhamjohnston.org.uk with "Mobile Phone Pouches" in the subject line for next steps.

Please note, any child who is declared not to own a mobile or smart devices but is later found to be in possession of a mobile or smart device will face a serious sanction in line with the updated school behaviour policy.

When will other year groups be receiving their pouches?

We will be rolling out the pouches one year group at a time. This phased approach allows us to support students as they adjust to the new routines and ensures that all systems are working smoothly before the next group begins. It also gives us time to confirm that we have the right number of unlocking stations, positioned in the most effective locations, and that the end-of-day unlocking process runs efficiently with a smaller number of students before scaling up.

What happens if a phone is seen during the school day and is not in a pouch?

The phone will be confiscated.

A parent or carer will be required to collect it from Reception.

A sanction will be applied in line with our behaviour policy for failure to follow instructions and having a banned item on our school site.

What if my child need to contact home during the school day?

We understand that students occasionally need to contact home during the school day. As mobile phones will be locked away in pouches, students will not be able to access their devices for this purpose.

If your child needs to contact home, they can do so by visiting Main Reception during break or lunchtime, where a member of staff will support them in making the call. This mirrors our current practice and ensures communication is safe, supervised, and does not disrupt learning.

If *you* need to contact your child urgently, please phone the main school office, and our administrative team will ensure the message is passed on promptly.

What is my child has wireless headphones, a smart watch or another smart device?

Wireless headphones, AirPods, smart watches and similar devices must also be placed inside the mobile phone pouch. These items cannot be worn or carried during the school day. If your child uses a smart watch for medical reasons, they will follow the same medical-access arrangements described above. Students should not be brining high value items into school and the school cannot accept any liability for the loss or damage of these items. Please note that Meta glasses are completely banned from the school site.

What happens if my child loses their pouch?

If a pouch is lost, a replacement must be purchased via ParentPay. Until a replacement is secured, your child must either hand their phone in at Reception each morning or choose not to bring their phone to school. Repeated loss of pouches may result in a parent/carer being required to collect the phone.

How does the school store phones handed in at Reception?

Phones handed in at Reception are stored securely; however, the school cannot accept liability for any loss or damage. It remains the student's responsibility to ensure their device is kept safe and brought to school with the required pouch.

Students will receive a collection card and must present this at 2:45 pm to collect their phone. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they keep the collection card secure. Loss of the collection card may result in a parent/carer being required to collect the phone.

How does my child unlock their pouch at the end of the day?

Students unlock their pouch by tapping it against one of the unlocking stations positioned outside the green gates. These stations are quick, simple to use, and supervised to ensure a smooth end-of-day routine.

To support this process, we will hold buses at the end of the day while students unlock their pouches. This ensures that no child misses their transport and that unlocking is calm, orderly, and safe.

How do I purchase a pouch?

Pouches can be purchased through ParentPay under the item titled Mobile Phone Pouch. Please ensure you select the correct child before completing payment. If you have more than one child at Durham Johnston, you will need to purchase a pouch for each child who brings a phone to school.

Financial Support

Families eligible for pupil premium or those requiring financial assistance can contact us at school@durhamjohnston.org.uk with "Mobile Phone Pouches" in the subject line.