

Knutsford Academy - Phone Free School - FAQs

Scope and Year Groups

Q: Why are mobile phones/smartwatches to be locked away in signal blocking pouches? From September 2026, the mobile phone/smartwatch-free policy will apply to Years 7 to 11. There is strong student, staff and parent opinion that states mobile phones are negatively impacting Knutsford Academy students education and wellbeing. There is also strong evidence from academic and medical sources that the excessive use of mobile phones has a negative effect on both physical and psychological wellbeing.

Website resources:

<https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/>

[Delay Smartphones.](#)

[Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

[Does Digital Media Use Affect Kids' Physical Health? - Children and Screens](#)

[The Anxious Generation — from a book to a movement](#)

Educational and awareness programmes, documentaries and short films:

[A Stolen Childhood: an informative short film exploring the impact of smartphones | Selected | Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

[Watch Swiped: The School That Banned Smartphones | Stream free on Channel 4](#)

[The Social Dilemma | Official Trailer | Netflix](#)

Q: Will the policy apply to Sixth Form students? At present, the phone pouch strategy does not apply to Sixth Form students. Sixth formers may use their mobile phone or smartwatch in the Sixth Form Centre ONLY. The focus is on the main school, our younger year groups, where evidence shows the greatest safeguarding and wellbeing concerns are. BUT, 6th form students must NOT use or display their phones anywhere except the 6th form Centre. If they do, they will be subject to sanctions, including confiscation.

Q: My child has a smartwatch—can they bring it to school? While we strongly advise against this, yes, technically they can bring a smartwatch to school. However, it must be locked away in the pouch throughout the school day. The same applies to smart glasses, AirPods, and other smart devices.

Students must not wear a smartwatch during the school day, even if it is not 3G/4G/5G enabled. Simple, inexpensive, non-smart-enabled timepieces may be worn.

Q: My child has a simple 'brick' (non-smart phones – Nokia 3310 or similar) can they bring this phone to school? This is the type of phone we actively encourage. Yes they can bring it to school, however, it must be locked away in the pouch throughout the school day

Q: Is this change permanent? Yes, from September 2026 this will be a permanent change to our school procedures. We will evaluate its impact throughout the next academic year and refine our procedures and policies, but the phone free school environment will be permanent.

Q: What additional education are you providing for students?

Online safety is taught through our PSHE curriculum for all year groups. We will also raise awareness, and support students through form time and assemblies. Raising awareness of the dangers of excessive exposure and a dependency to smart devices will be a strategic

focus and Knutsford Academy as we aim to empower our students to regulate their own digital dependency through , support, education and enlightenment.

Q. Will I be able to read the policies that underpin this new Phone Free School

strategy? Yes – All policies will be available online as soon as they have been ratified by the relevant stakeholders and governing body. Policies that will have amendments referencing the phone pouch system will be:

- Mobile Phone Policy
- Uniform Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Searching and Screening Policy
- Suspensions and Exclusion Policy
- Charging and remissions Policy.

Q. My child uses their mobile phone to check their timetable and homework. The school will provide all students with a *Student Planner* to record both their timetable and homework. We recognise that education nationally has evolved and that there is an increasing reliance on digital platforms for learning and homework. This is an area we are addressing strategically at Knutsford Academy. We will continue to review and refine our approach to homework delivery, while also acknowledging that there may be a need to reduce reliance on digital devices during the school day. This is a journey rather than a fixed endpoint, and we are committed to ensuring that young people remain at the centre of all decisions we make. We will remain proactive and responsive to the day-to-day challenges faced by our school community.

Phone Pouch procedures

Q: How will the phone pouch system be implemented? As the student arrives at school, they will be asked to turn off their phone (and other smart devices) and place them inside a Secure, Lockable, Signal blocking Phone Pouch under the direct supervision of Knutsford Academy staff. All students will be routinely 'wanded' to ensure they don't have prohibited items such as second phones, concealed smart devices or unlock mechanisms. They will not have access to their phone until they leave site at 3:10, where they will use wall mounted unlocking devices.

The entry point process:

Turn off phone.

Touch screen (to prove it is turned off)

Place in in pouch (with smart watch/earbuds where necessary) and click the locking mechanism

Hold the pouch at the bottom and turn upside down (to prove it is securely locked).

'Wand check' (to ensure students don't have prohibited items)

Q. What happens if my child forgets their pouch? It will be recorded on an entry point check record sheet, they will have one behaviour point added to their Arbor record (the phone pouch is an essential pieces of equipment, as outlined in the uniform policy). They will also turn off their phone (and other devices) hand them in where they will be stored securely in a

individually allocated zip wallet. This will be stored in the office and can be collect at 3:15 (lower school) and 3:25 (at upper school).

Q. What happens if my child forgets their pouch AND doesn't bring their phone? It will be recorded on an entry point check record sheet, they will have one behaviour point added to their Arbor record for not having their pouch with them (the phone pouch is an essential pieces of equipment, as outlined in the uniform policy). They will be 'wanded' (like everyone else) to ensure they don't have a concealed phone or other smart devices.

Q. What happens if my child doesn't bring a phone, but has brought their pouch? Nothing. They will be 'wanded' (like everyone else) to ensure they don't have a concealed phone or other smart devices.

Q. Will there be enough unlocking devices to prevent queues and delays at the end of the day? Yes – we have engaged in rigorous consultation and been guided by a specialist phone pouch provider who has conducted a detailed site visit and advise accordingly on the necessary number of wall-mounted unlocking mechanisms. We are confident we have sufficient unlocking mechanisms at suitable exit points for the footfall at each location. We will monitor this during the initial phases and if necessary, move the unlocking devices or purchase additional unlocking mechanisms.

Q: What if I need to collect my child early from school due to an appointment or illness? There will be unlocking devices located in each office/reception at each of the school sites where you will collect your child.

Safety, Tracking, and Emergencies

Q: How can I ensure my child's safety when travelling to and from school without a smartphone/watch? Your child will have full access to their phone during the journey to and from school. We encourage parents/carers to provide a basic non-smartphone ('brick' phone) for calls and texts only.

Q: What if my child has an emergency? During the school day, they can speak to reception or pastoral staff if they urgently need to contact you.

Q: What if I have an emergency and need to contact my child? During the school day, you can call and speak to reception, and they will be able to ensure your child receives any critical messages in an efficient and timely manner.

Lower school (Yr 7 & 8): 01565 652019

Upper School (Yr 9-13): 01565 633294

Communication with Parents

Q: How will I communicate with my child if they stay late for clubs or trips? It is our hope that students will develop more proactive and diligent organisation skills and be able to communicate effectively in advance of any activities. If there are any last-minute changes, this can be communicated via the office, lead member of staff or at the end of the school day (after unlocking).

Q: How will the school communicate with parents when children are offsite? We will continue to communicate with parents via staff and usual channels for trips, sports fixtures and events. In addition, we will update social media channels regularly and should trips or fixtures leave the venue late. We will work with staff and it may be deemed necessary that students have access to their phones while on some trips and in some specific off site activities. This will be informed based on safety and safeguarding and will be at the discretion of the lead member of staff, in consultation with the school's senior leadership team. It is expected that granting students access to phones while off site in specific situations will be the exception, rather than the expectation.

Legal and Practical Concerns

Q: Is it legal for the school to confiscate a mobile phone/smartwatch? Yes. From September, any mobile phone or smartwatch seen on the school site will be classed as a 'prohibited item'. If a student takes one out of a pouch, it will be confiscated, they will be isolated and their behaviour record will be updated to reflect this serious misdemeanour. This is within the scope of the Department for Education guidance on confiscations for schools.

Q: Who is responsible for damage or loss of confiscated devices? We recommend following the policy to avoid this risk. After the confiscation period is complete, devices will be returned to the student. Schools are not held liable for damage or loss of confiscated items, as per government guidelines.

Q: How can blended families ensure that their child has a mobile phone/smartwatch over the weekend? At no point is it our intention to confiscate a smart phone/digital device outside of the school day. For safeguarding purposes, it will always be our intention to re-unite the student with the device prior to leaving the school grounds. This is why we have such serious sanctions as an alternative to overnight phone confiscation.

Financial Concerns

Q: I can't purchase a replacement phone pouch — what support is available? The requirement to have pouch is part of the uniform policy and classified as an essential piece of equipment. We are providing every student a pouch for **free**. If they lose it, or damage it, they will be expected to replace it at their family's expense via the online TLP phone pouch replacement portal. We appreciate this can be an extra cost that is challenging for some families. If this is not possible, we can issue a replacement pouch and the cost can be added to ParentPay so the replacement cost (approx. £10) can be spread into smaller payments over an extended period of time.

Policy Details and Exceptions

Q: Are there exceptions for medical needs? There will be dealt with on a case by cases basis. Diabetes is an example where a non-signal blocking and easy access pouch will be issued so the students can still safely monitor their condition. This will of course be coupled with bespoke compliance expectations and failure to comply with these expectations will be subject to the same serious sanctions as anyone else.

Q: Are there exceptions for SEND/SEMH? The short answer is no. The Department for Education make is explicitly clear that all students must comply with these expectations. Even students with SEND/SEMH, reasonable adjustments must be made in **exceptional** circumstances. Again, this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. N.B. Reasonable

adjustments will not allow access to phones, rather, supportive mechanisms will be implemented to circumvent a reliance on mobile phones.

Q: What are the consequences for phone misuse (breach of policy)?

What constitutes misuse:

- Using a phone
- Found with a phone not in the pouch.
- Phone in the pouch, but emitting sound, due to it not being turned off.
- Finding a student in possession of a smart watch or ear pods.
- Finding a student in possession of an unlocking device
- Finding the student in possession of a tampered/damaged pouch, rendering it ineffective (phone can be accessed or the signal blocking is ineffective)

Sanctions:

Breaches of Policy – Year 7-11 Sanctions

Breach Type	Sanction
Phone pouch forgotten	Behaviour point issued on Arbor each time. Phone handed in and stored securely
Phone/smartwatch not placed in pouch (1 st offence)	Internal Isolation + SLT Friday After-school Detention
Attempting to cheat system e.g. second phone, unlock tools used or brought into school. (1 st offence)	Internal Isolation + SLT Friday After-school Detention
Vandalism or damage to pouch	Internal Isolation + parent/carer charge + SLT Friday After-school Detention
<u>Second offence</u> of the above breach classifications	Internal Isolation until parent/carer can collect + 1 day suspension
Persistent non-compliance with secure pouch expectations for mobile phones	Escalating sanctions up to and including multi-day suspension or permanent exclusion.

Breaches of Policy – 6th Form Sanctions

Breach Type (Study room)	Sanction
Using mobile phone for non-educational purposes.	Asked to leave the study area for the remainder of that period.
Using mobile phone for non-educational purposes – repeated offences.	Confiscation, leading to the incremental sanctions pathway outlined below.
Breach type (Main school including classroom)	Sanction
Phone out, on display or being used (including earphones/headphones). 1 st offence.	Confiscation. Name taken and handed to the 6 th form office. Can be collected at 3:10, no earlier, and no exception.
Phone out, on display or being used (including earphones/headphones). 2 nd offence.	Confiscation. Name taken and handed to the 6 th form office. Can be collected at 3:10, no earlier, and no exception. 6 th Form phone pouch procedure initiated for two days. *
Phone out, on display or being used (including earphones/headphones). 3 rd offence.	Confiscation. Name taken and handed to the 6 th form office. Can be collected at 3:10, no earlier, and no exception. 6 th Form phone pouch procedure initiated for five days. *
Phone out, on display or being used (including earphones/headphones). Repeated offences.	Bespoke strategies (phone handed in every day, permanent phone pouch). Consider escalatory sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy.

*6th form phone pouch procedure:

- Day 1.
- Phone to 6th form office.
- Phone turned off and placed in pouch, supervised by 6th form staff.
- 6th form student 'wanded' to check for contraband
- Student unlocks phone at 3:10 using the wall mounted unlocking devices/handheld unlocking device in the 6th form office.
- Final day.

As above, but the phone pouch is returned to the 6th form office, unlocked and handed in.