



17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear Parent or Carer,

I hope this letter finds you well. As we approach the end of the current academic year, I am sharing some important updates regarding our mobile phone policy and the rationale behind these changes. As it currently stands, our policy on mobile phones is that they are not permitted to be seen or used during the hours of the school day (between 8.15 a.m. and 3.15 p.m.). Our primary focus is always the physical and mental well-being and safeguarding of our students. After careful consideration and consultation with experts, we have decided to implement a new policy approach regarding mobile phone usage at our school for students in Yr7-11.

### **Mental Well-Being**

Research has consistently shown that excessive use of mobile phones, particularly smartphones, can have detrimental effects on students' mental health. The constant connectivity and exposure to social media can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Additionally, the presence of mobile phones can be a significant distraction, impacting students' ability to concentrate and engage fully in their learning.

By preventing the unsupervised use of mobile phones during school hours, we aim to create a more focused and less stressful environment for our students. This change is intended to promote better mental health, allowing students to develop deeper interpersonal connections, improve their focus on academic tasks, and engage more fully in the school community.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding our students is of utmost importance. Mobile phones can pose significant risks in terms of privacy, cyberbullying, and exposure to inappropriate content. By prohibiting mobile phone use during school time, we can better protect our students from these potential dangers and ensure a safer school environment.

**Government advice on mobile phones - Information can be found here:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools>

**The DfE report:** *“By the time pupils arrive at secondary school, ownership of mobile phones is ubiquitous – by the age of 12, 97% of children own a mobile phone. The use of mobile phones in schools leads to distraction and disruption and can exacerbate misbehaviour and bullying.”*

**The DfE adds the impact of mobile phones in schools as:**

- *“29% of secondary school pupils reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons.”*
- *“One in five children have experienced bullying online.”*
- *“Screen time can displace activities which have a positive impact on wellbeing such as socialising and exercise.”*

The UK Government has provided clear guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools, highlighting the importance of minimising distractions and safeguarding students. In line with this advice, we are taking proactive steps to ensure that our school is a safe and supportive place for all students.

The view of the UK Government is that mobile phones should be banned in schools.

### **Updated Mobile Phone Policy**

When students return in September 2024, students will be required to lock their mobile phones and digital devices such as AirPods and headphones away securely in **Yondr pouches** between **8.15 a.m. and 3.15 p.m. or, if applicable, until any detention sanction has been completed.** Yondr pouches are a practical solution that allows students to keep their phones with them without the temptation and/or ability to use them. The pouches can only be unlocked at the end of the school day or under the supervision of a member of staff. This ensures that digital devices, including phones are inaccessible during lessons and other critical school activities. More information about Yondr can be found here: <https://www.veryondr.com/phone-free-schools>. The school will provide each student with one pouch at no cost to families. Should the pouch be lost, you will need to purchase a new one through Parent Pay.

The Government has suggested that students who do not comply with the school rules on mobile phones should have them confiscated. Using the Yondr system allows students to retain their phones and largely removes the need for confiscation. Removing a phone from a child would only be used as a last resort if a student failed to lock their phone in the Yondr pouch.

This policy update has been carefully planned to balance the need for communication with parents and the necessity of maintaining a conducive learning environment. We understand that there may be occasions when students need to use their phones, and we have established protocols to handle these situations appropriately. Students who need access to their phones for medical reasons will not be affected as they will have their own pouches they can access when they need to. If you need to contact your child urgently, you can do so via the student support team. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the school or add them to this [link](#) or via the school website <https://www.unity.blackpool.org.uk/>.

We will provide a series of assemblies for all students in Years 6-10 to help prepare them for this change in the coming weeks. Similarly, there will be a link for parents/carers to watch a short video on how the system works added on the school website.

We believe that this new policy will significantly contribute to the well-being and safety of our students. We kindly ask for your support and cooperation in reinforcing these guidelines at home and by completing and returning the agreement attached. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Thank you in anticipation of your understanding and partnership in making our school a positive and secure place for our students to thrive and succeed.

Yours sincerely



Mr R. Bradshaw

Deputy Headteacher