



17 July 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

Mobile Phone Policy: The use of mobile phones in School

In February, the Government published new guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools with the recommendation of a ban on the use of phones throughout the school day. We have always had a mobile phone policy here at Etonbury of red, amber and green phone zones. Following on from the new guidance we have taken time to review the current policy and feel it is time to amend our approach to mobile phones.

Our starting point for the mobile phone review was the social, emotional and safeguarding needs of our pupils and to provide our pupils with the best learning environment possible. Along with our commitment to making sure that the young people who attend Etonbury are educated on using social media in a responsible way, through the personal development lessons in our curriculum. The 2023 National Parent Survey found that parents' top concern for their children's mental health and wellbeing was the amount of time and use of mobile phone devices. In school we have seen an increase in pupils who struggle with the impact that social media has on their wellbeing.

We believe having access to a mobile phone when travelling to and from school, gives pupils and parents additional levels of reassurance and the ability to communicate however; the research shows positive results of schools who have created phone free spaces and reduced access to phones. Research in schools shows that learning, mental health and social behaviour improve when students are fully engaged in their interactions with teachers and fellow pupils.

From September Etonbury Academy will become a phone free space for year 7. We will be using pouches from the company Hush to achieve this goal.





Schools that have adopted this policy have been extremely pleased with the outcomes, pupils are showing greater levels of independence and less anxiety, especially in the lower senior school years when they are navigating the complexity of friendships where phones sometimes get in the way of building healthy relational habits. Schools who have been using phone pouches for a while have identified the following progress since their implementation.

- 65% of schools saw an improvement in academic performance
- 74% of schools saw an improvement in student behaviour
- 83% of schools saw an improvement in student engagement in the classroom
- 90% noticed a significant improvement in the well-being of students over time

From September the use of mobile phones will be restricted as follows:

- **Etonbury Junior School** remains a mobile phone free school. If a student has a phone, it will continue to be handed in at the start of the school day.
- **In Year 7 pupils will not be allowed to access their phones during the school day.** They will be issued with a self-locking phone pouch at the start of the year. They will maintain possession of their phone at all times and lock them into their pouch from 8.40am to 3.30pm. The fabric pouches have locked buttons which will be released at the end of the school day by the pupil at various touch points that will be located outside the school gate. Once in a pouch the pupils will place their phone pouch in their bag for the duration of the school day. Having their phone in their bag unlocked is not acceptable. Form Tutors will check that phones are placed in the pouches at the start of each day. The pouches ensure all signals to the phones are blocked. These younger year groups will not have access to their phones for the entire school day, including break and lunch times.
- **In Years 8-11** we will amend our mobile phone policy in the school buildings to '*never seen, never heard*' and expect that pupils will turn their phone off and place it in their school bag on arrival to school at 8.40am. These pupils will be allowed limited access to their phones in outside spaces and the canteen, only at break and lunch times. We expect our older pupils to be responsible with the use of their mobile phone.
- **Sixth Form** students will be allowed to use their phones in the sixth form centre and garden space. We will expect our sixth form learners to model best practice and not have their phone visible whilst walking around the main school site.

We have spoken to the new year 7 pupils on step up day about the change in our policy, and have shown the pupils the phone pouches. I do hope you will support us in helping your child see this as a change that will benefit their enjoyment and engagement in the school day

We will continue with our personal development (PD) programme as part of our curriculum to support the pupils' understanding of how to stay safe online. We are fully committed to the use of technology to support their education. We know and understand the digital capabilities of a mobile phone and we will still harness this in exceptional circumstances and under teacher direction and for the older year groups only.



Frequently Asked Questions

What if I want to reach my child during the school day?

If you are a parent/carer and you need to contact your child during the school day in an emergency, please do so by phoning the school reception 01462 730391; the team will get a message to your child. If a pupil becomes unwell during the school day and has to go home you will continue to be contacted by the medical team in the first instance. We ask that pupils should not be contacting parents/carers directly.

What if there is an emergency?

School staff have the facility be able to unlock a Hush phone case in a matter of seconds for pupils when it is deemed appropriate to do so.

Will my child's phone be safe?

Yes, because students are in possession of their phone in the Hush pouch at all times and should keep the case stored away in their school bag or pocket.

What if the case gets lost, damaged or is forgotten?

If a pupil forgets their Hush case, they will be required to hand in their phone to the attendance office for the day instead of locking it away in a pouch. The Hush case is the property of Etonbury Academy. Any damage to or loss of school property will result in a replacement pouch being issued and a charge made to the parent. The first pouch will be issued by Etonbury free to all year 7 pupils, any replacements due to loss or damage will be charged at £10 for each replacement pouch.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Craddock Vice Principal mcraddock@bestacademies.org.uk

In an effort to provide your child with the most productive learning environment, we appreciate your full support in adoption of the Hush mobile phone pouch programme at Etonbury Academy.

Kind regards

Mrs Joanne Young
Principal

Partners and awards



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