

July 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

Since Appleton Academy opened in September 2009, the Behaviour for Learning Policy has clearly stated that children and young people are not allowed to use their phone at any time during the school day. Although there have always been a small minority of pupils who have regularly flouted this rule, the issues caused by mobile phone use have significantly increased over the last two years. This includes children and young people using their phone in school, and parents contacting their children on their phones while they are at school. We made all pupils aware that we would need to consider a total ban if the situation didn't improve and phone related issues continued to have a negative impact on the education and wellbeing of children and young people.

In our latest survey with pupils:

- 85% admit to using their phone during the school day
- 76% said that their friendship issues had increased due to social media use
- Most agree that the current policy isn't working and needs to change

When we asked staff, every member of staff told us they see pupils on phones daily and the pastoral team report that the reason behind nearly all social issues they deal with, or instances of lesson disruption, is due to phone use.

As a result of the ongoing issues with phone and social media use, we have decided it is time to make a change to the policy on mobile phones in school. From September 2025, we will be introducing mobile phone pouches for all pupils from Years 5 to Year 11.

### **Reasons for this decision**

Despite having a long-established expectation within the school that phones should not be seen or used during the school day, the issues related to phone use have now reached a point that means the current situation is unsustainable. We are increasingly seeing the significant negative impact on the wellbeing and behaviours of children and young people associated with mobile phone use, both in and out of school. For quite some time, we have observed an increase in the time taken up in resolving issues related to social media use outside school, which leads to conflict in school. Unfortunately, there has also now been an increase in social media related issues within school time.

Evidence from studies shows that social media can cause significant mental health and wellbeing issues for young people and this is now also evident with our primary children. As a school, we share these concerns about how social media is impacting on pupils. Social media use has grown significantly in recent years and there is a suggestion from experts that children and young people are becoming 'addicted'. This is now another aspect of growing up and a genuine and increasing concern. Research suggests that young people are increasingly becoming heavy users of social media, often spending more than five hours per day on social networking sites. They are now more likely to report poor mental health, including symptoms of anxiety and depression, as a result.

Alongside the concern for the wellbeing of children and young people, the issues caused by mobile phone use are becoming an increasing distraction to learning, social development and the effective operation of the school. Social issues, bullying and abuse are more common and are made worse due to social media, group chats and mobile phones. Inevitably, the time taken to resolve these issues and mobile phone associated worry, anxiety, and depression within school by both staff and the Safer Schools Police Officer is taking away from their ability to support those who need it most. Removing the ability to use phones in school will also remove the disruption to learning caused by the distraction mobile phones create.

Schools who have already introduced phone bans or phone pouches have found a significant improvement in the social skills of children and young people, much improved concentration in lessons and they report that children and young people are happier and less likely to experience anxiety.

### **How does it work?**

The phone pouches are designed and made by a company called Phone Locker who support schools and entertainment venues across the world. The pouch can only be unlocked with an unlocking device and whilst the phone is in the pouch, the signal is blocked. Any calls or messages sent to the phone during the school day will not be received until the pouch is unlocked as your child leaves the building.

Your child will be given an Appleton Academy designed mobile phone pouch as they enter the building each day. They will put their phone, and ear buds, into the pouch and lock it before putting the pouch into the inside pocket of their blazer and starting their day. Your child will not be able to access their phone until they leave the building. As pupils leave the building, they will have access to an unlocking device. Once they have unlocked their phone, they will remove their phone from the pouch and the pouch will be collected from them by staff as they leave.

There will be a series of assemblies before we break up in July to explain this change to policy to children and young people. We will have a staggered return to school for pupils at the beginning of the new academic year in September 2025, to support pupils with this change. Additional time will also initially be built into the school day to allow pupils to get used to the new procedures. This will take place over two days at the start of term in the new school year.

Years 5 and 6 children will collect their pouch at the classroom door and once their phone is locked inside the pouch, their pouch will be kept in their tray.

### **Do I have to pay for a pouch?**

Phone pouches are being introduced in hundreds of schools across the country and most schools expect pupils to pay for the phone pouch, as they are making it part of their Uniform Policy. However, we want to save families from this additional cost and your child will be provided with a pouch at the beginning of every day and it will then be collected in again as they leave, meaning we can avoid passing a cost on to parents and carers.

If a pouch is deliberately damaged by pupils, however, a cost of £25.00 for a replacement will be passed on to parents and carers.

### **How will I contact my child during the day?**

You are already advised to contact either the school office by phone, or ideally we ask that parents and carers email [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk) in the first instance if you need to get a message to your child. A member of staff will then ensure that this message is passed on to your child. This process will remain in place from September when the phone pouches are introduced. Any non-urgent messages can still be sent to your child's mobile number; however, they will only receive the message as they leave school.

### **Can I request an exemption for my child?**

We are already aware of pupils who have a medical need that requires them to access their phone, and an adaptation will be made to their risk assessment in these cases allowing them to keep their mobile phones on their person, and accessible, allowing them to manage their wellbeing. This exemption applies to a very small number of pupils who use their phone to monitor paired medical devices. These pupils will use a 'medical pouch' which will look the same as the others but will allow them to access their phone if their medical implant sends an alert.

We will work with the pupils concerned, and their families, to put a bespoke plan in place in these cases - Mrs Rutherford has already contacted these families to explain the process and reassure them that this will meet the medical needs of their child.

**There will be no other exemptions.**

**Further information**

We have provided an FAQ sheet on the school website, which will answer many of the questions you may have. This can be found by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8yt8ej>. If you cannot find the information you require, please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk).

As a school, we did not expect to be in the position of introducing an outright ban on mobile phones. However, we now feel this is necessary for the education, wellbeing and happiness of our children and young people. This will be a big change to the way we work and there may be some teething problems to begin with so please be patient. I would like to thank you in advance for your support in this matter and look forward to hearing your feedback once we commence using the mobile phone pouches in the autumn term.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Jones".

Ms H Jones  
Executive Headteacher