

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **Phones and uniform**

You may have seen Ormiston Academies Trust recently in the news:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgdx7ddz55o>

We are pleased that more OAT schools are joining us on our journey towards becoming 'phone free'. For many years we have had a phone policy of 'not seen or heard' with the expectation that students do not check their phones during the day. Students have told us that some find it hard to resist the urge to check their phone during the day and the most common reason they gave why they might be drawn to their phones was to check or send messages to/from parents or friends. We also know that the biggest motivator for parents to give children a phone is for safety, and their reassurance, on the journey to/from school through keeping in contact or tracking.

We have already surveyed our CEC parents over the summer holidays and shared the results with you. Parents told us that they would like a stricter phone policy (70%) and we are keen to support students to keep their attention on learning and reduce distraction. Our continuing drive as a school is to secure full student attention and we know that even the presence of an accessible phone in a school bag distracts from learning. Our student voice tells us that the vast majority of students do manage to resist checking their phones but there is a significant portion of the student body where phones present such a distraction it negatively impacts on learning.

We asked our students how we could best become 'phone free' and they decided to use a pouch approach. We will be using a system called [Yondr](#).

**The Yondr Program utilises a simple, secure pouch that stores a phone.** Every student will secure their phone in a personally assigned Yondr pouch when they arrive at school. **Students will maintain possession of their phones and will not use them until their pouches are opened at the end of the school day.** Students are required to bring their Yondr pouch to and from school each day and are responsible for their pouch at all times.

Yondr has been implemented in over 3,000 schools across 21 countries to facilitate an engaged learning environment. Yondr recently surveyed over 900 school partners to measure the effects of creating phone-free educational environments. These schools achieved notable progress in multiple areas:

- 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
- 86% of schools saw a positive impact on student safety and wellness

Cowes Enterprise College phone policy acknowledges there may a small number of students where the Yondr system does not suit their needs. This may be for medical reasons, for example for diabetic blood glucose monitoring. We have already planned for this and will be in contact with you separately. If you believe your child requires access to their phone during the school day please email [info@cowesec.org](mailto:info@cowesec.org) and we can look at each request individually.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly on 01983 203103 or attend our online parent information session on **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October at 6pm** where there will be representatives from CEC and Yondr present. [Linked here.](#)

Ofcom's 2022 research into technology use across the UK has shown that nearly all 13 – 15 year olds (98%) have their own phone. For most of these young people, they were given their phones around the start of secondary school, between the ages of 9 and 11 (91%). In light of this high figure we will assume all students have a phone however if your child does not have a phone and/or does not bring one to school please complete [this short form](#).

The appendix to the behaviour for learning policy in relation to phones is attached to this letter along with a FAQ. Your child will be taught how to use the Yondr system in school through assemblies and tutor time. Please familiarise yourself with the policy so you are able to support your child with the new system and processes. A reminder that smart watches are not permitted in school.

We are planning to launch the Yondr pouch system on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 with students being issued their pouch on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 ready for the following morning.

Moving forwards, rest assured that in the case of needing to contact your child urgently during the school day, you can do so by speaking to a member of the Reception Team on 01983 203103 or by using [info@cowesec.org](mailto:info@cowesec.org) and we will prioritise this.

In an effort to best serve your child, we appreciate your full support in adoption of the Yondr Program at our school.

### **Uniform**

You will have noticed that we have made some adaptations to our uniform expectations in response to student and parent voice this academic year. We want to have more positive conversations with our students and are now freed up to do so. We are listening and interested to hear more about how we can adapt or change our uniform to fit culturally in the academy and where we are in modern British society more broadly.

We are in the pilot phase of the uniform changes and keen to hear how it is going and where else we can make tweaks. [Please complete this short survey](#) to give us your feedback on uniform. We are open to making short term changes and look more broadly and holistically at our uniform in the longer term. We aim to ensure our uniform is fit for purpose, both affordable and comfortable for students to wear.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Kitley  
Principal

## How Yondr Works



As students enter school, they place their phone in their assigned Yondr Pouch.

Students close and secure their Pouch, keeping it on them throughout the day.

When leaving school, students tap their Pouch on a Base to retrieve their phone.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **What if I want to contact my child during the school day?**

We want our students to be engaged in their learning. If you need to contact your child during the school day, contact the main office on 01983 203103.

- **What if there is a school emergency?**

In case of a school emergency, we direct our students to safety first, following our school emergency procedures. If required, we will contact you as soon as it is safe to do so.

- **Will my student's phone be safe?**

Students are in possession of their phone - in their Yondr pouch - for the entire school day. We will advise students to store the pouch in their backpacks where it is completely safe.

- **What if the Yondr pouch gets damaged or a student is caught on their phone?**

If a student damages their pouch deliberately we will confiscate their phone, call home and parents will be liable for the cost of a replacement. This will also attract a very serious sanction.

Damaged pouches will be billed to parents at a cost of £25

*Note: Damage consists of any signs that the physical integrity of the pouch has been compromised, whether intentional or unintentional, as determined by the school or Yondr staff.*

If a student is found in possession of a phone outside a Yondr pouch, the phone will be confiscated, and a serious sanction issued which may include an external suspension. Please note we are issuing a pouch free of charge initially, not all Yondr schools do this.

- **What happens if a student forgets to open their pouch at the end of the day?**

In Yondr's experience, this almost never happens. All students go past the unlocking stations at the exits, they want their phones back and don't forget to unlock their pouches. If they do arrive home with a phone in a pouch, they can either come back to school to unlock it, or have a phone free evening!

- **What happens if a student forgets to take their pouch to school?**

The student should speak to their head of year on the entry to the building. We are able to look after their phone at the main office in the safe for that day.

- **How quick is the unlocking process?**

The unlocking process is quick, and takes under a second per student. While students are still getting used to how to unlock pouches, staff will be on hand with mobile unlocking stations to stop queues forming in the first few weeks. If needed we will add extra unlocking points.

- **Can we use the pouch at home?**

Yes! We will be teaching students how Yondr could be used as a useful study aid. Locking their phone away in the evening to focus on homework and exam revision will be extremely beneficial to their focus, especially students in Year 11 during the lead up to the GCSE exam season.

- **What if my child refuses to put their phone in the pouch?**

We will be supporting children on entry to the building each day to check their phone is put in the pouch and it is locked. If a child refuses we will take this extremely seriously unless they are exempt (see information above for the process for exemption). We want to remove distractions from learning and it is a significant infringement of our school culture to refuse to do this and may result in an external suspension from school.