



10 March 2025

Dear Parents/Carers

Change to Mobile Phone Policy

As you are probably aware, the Department of Education has been carrying out extensive research on the use of mobile phones in schools and have issued guidance for schools. An extract of that report is shown below:

Every school has a duty to create an environment that is calm, safe and free from distraction so all pupils, whatever their background, can learn and thrive. One of the greatest challenges facing schools is the presence of mobile phones. Today, by the age of 12, 97% of pupils own a mobile phone.

Mobile phones risk unnecessary distraction, disruption and diversion. One in three secondary school pupils report that mobile phones are used in most lessons without permission.

This not only distracts the single pupil using the phone, but disrupts the lesson for a whole class, and diverts teachers' efforts away from learning. We owe it to our children to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom. We also owe it to our pupils to keep them safe at school. One in five pupils have experienced bullying online.

By removing mobile phones from the school day, we can create a safe space where pupils are protected from the risks and dangers associated with social media and cyber-bullying, as well as the peer pressure and possible stigma associated with owning what are often expensive devices. This is why we are determined that all schools should prohibit the use of mobile phones throughout the school day – not only during lessons but break and lunchtimes as well. Three in ten pupils cite making and maintaining friendships and their mental health as a cause of worry, anxiety or depression.

Smartphones are a big part of life today. Most adults have one. They are great for finding information and staying connected with family and friends. However, there is now an alarming amount of evidence and research of the negative effects of smartphones and social media on children and teenagers. Research now indicates that age 11-15 is the age group when children are at their most vulnerable to potential negative influences from access to social media.

These negative effects include:

- Poor mental health, such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.
- Issues with cyberbullying, attention, focus and sleep.
- Exposure to dangerous and harmful content, and inappropriate material.
- Smartphones can be highly addictive, so time spent on a device reduces time spent playing, interacting and developing vital social skills.

At Harris we have become increasingly concerned about the negative impact on students' wellbeing and attainment linked to the use of mobile phones in our school. Therefore, we have decided to launch our new phone policy which will become live after **May half term (2 June 2025) for Years 7 to 10.**

We are going to make our school a phone-free space to improve teaching and learning and student wellbeing, using mobile phone pouches. These pouches have been successfully used in over 3000 schools across 21 countries to facilitate an engaged learning environment.

Each student will need to purchase a phone pouch, if they would like to bring a phone in to school. Your son / daughter has been informed during an assembly today in relation to these changes.

The **pouches** will **cost £11.00** and **must be purchased via Wisepay by Monday, 7th April**. **All students who bring a phone to school will need to lock their phone away in their pouch for the day.**

If parents **do not** want them to have a pouch, the student will **not** be allowed to bring a phone in to school. Non-compliance with the phone policy would result in the phone being confiscated and only returned to parents after a 24 hour period. Additional sanctions will follow for persistent non-compliance.

Daily process:

- When they arrive at school each day students will lock their phone into their pouch for the day.
- They will keep this in their bag until leaving site.
- They will be able to unlock their pouch using the magnetic fobs placed on the outside of the building when they leave.

We appreciate that parents do want their children to have access to their phones for their journeys to and from school and this process will enable this. There may be occasions where parents and students need to contact each other during the school day; this can be facilitated via Reception or Student Services.

We are keen to hear your feedback and to address any issues or concerns you may have. We are hosting a **'smartphone free childhood evening'** at **6:00 to 7:00pm on Thursday, 3rd April**, to share key information around this very important topic.

Pouches need to be purchased via **Wisepay by Monday, 7th April** so that we can order them to distribute after May half term.

Please remember **if your child does not have a pouch they will not be allowed to bring their phone to school.**

Yours faithfully



Mrs R Harrison
Headteacher