# Mobile Phone & Communication Policy

BETHANY SCHOOL
CURTISDEN GREEN
GOUDHURST
KENT

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## Revision History

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# 1. Introduction and summary

*The School recognises that there are legitimate reasons for pupils to carry mobile phones, such as for travel arrangements and emergency contact with parents or guardians. However, mobile phones are increasingly becoming a distraction from learning at best, and at worst, are a means of causing harm. Our existing mobile phone policy has been reviewed, and we have found a way to better implement it and enforce existing rules with the simple Yondr pouch scheme.*

*This policy lays out the rules of mobile phone (and associated accessories) use. Other policies may refer to this policy (Online safety policy) and should be seen as complementary.*

Mobile phones are not allowed to be on or used during the school day.

Yondr Pouches must be used to store mobile phones and associated accessories during the School day by all Y**ear 7-10 pupils.** Levels apply where these rules are flouted.

**Year 11 pupils** are exempt from the requirement of locking their phone in the Yondr Pouch. However, if a mobile phone is found turned on or being used without the express permission of a member of staff, all Levels described in this policy apply.

**Sixth form pupils** are allowed to use their phone in the Sixth Form centre only. Anyone using their phone outside of this location is also subject to the same Levels described below.

Pupils are expected to check and respond to emails and Teams messages at key times daily, using polite and formal language, and to report any concerning behaviour. Electronic communication after 17:00 on weekdays and during weekends or holidays may not receive a response until the next school day, with exceptions for urgent safeguarding concerns. **All use of school IT systems must remain educational and appropriate, in line with the School's Online Safety and Computer Usage and Behaviour policies**.

## 2. The Yondr Pouch and Mobile Phones

Pupils may bring a mobile phone to School for the purpose of safe travel to and from the School. However, mobile phones are not to be used during the School day. **Every pupil in Year 7 to 10** is assigned a personal Yondr Pouch. This is a locking Pouch that will prevent access to phones. It is each pupil's responsibility to bring their Pouch with them to school every day and keep it in good working condition. The cost of the pouch is currently £30 including VAT and parents are billed for the initial pouch and any replacement that is necessary due to loss or misuse.

### 2.1.1 Beginning of the Day

Pupils must bring their Yondr Pouch to School with them each day.

As pupils arrive to the School they will:

1. Turn their phone off
2. Open their Yondr Pouch by tapping against the Unlocking Base
3. Place their phone and/or smart watch inside the Yondr Pouch and secure it
4. Store it in their backpack or schoolbag for the day

Staff will be present to oversee and spot-check each morning. If for whatever reason, staff are not present, pupils should still follow this procedure. If pupils have difficulty locking their phone in the Yondr Pouch in the morning, they should report to the School Office or ask any member of staff for help. The absence of staff on a given morning cannot be used to justify having a phone outside of a Yondr Pouch, as the locking works through self-service and support is always available when pupils come to the School Office.

### 2.1.2 End of the Day

Pupils will visit Unlocking Bases after 16:55 and will:

1. Open their Yondr Pouch
2. Remove their phone and/or smart watch
3. Close their Yondr Pouch (important to stop the pin bending in the bag)
4. Keep in their schoolbag overnight

Late Starters or Early Leavers: Pupils arriving late (after 08:30) or leaving early (before 16:55) will pouch/unpouch their phones in the School Office.

### 2.1.3 Communication between Pupils and Parents

If pupils need to call home due to an emergency, they may request permission to do so from their Tutor or the Head of Year or Wellness Centre staff. This helps the staff to monitor pastoral concerns. Parents may leave messages with Reception or School Office. Pupils will also be able to pick up messages via email on their laptops and on their phones at 16:55, when pouches are unlocked.

## 3. Wearable technology

Wearable technology that is capable of recording sound or video footage is not permitted on the school site. Smart watches that have communication ability such as the Apple Watch must be placed inside the Yondr Pouch with the mobile phone or on it's own if no phone is brought into school. Wearable technology required for medical reasons and that is agreed as required by the Senior School Nurse can be worn. Watches and rings that only record health and fitness data such as Fitbits may also be worn but may need to be removed for some sports activities for Health and Safety reasons.

Technology such as Meta's AI wearable technology "Muse" is not permitted as it can record data not only for the wearer of the technology but also of those in the environment surrounding the wearer.

Any wearable technology capable of recording sound or video footage will be treated as a serious offence even if it does not appear to have been used in school and if found will generate a Level 4.

## 4. Levels Lists

**Levels List Year 7 to 10 pupils**

| **Offence**<br>**Years 7-10** | **Level** |
|---|---|
| Phone found outside Yondr during School day unless unlocked by a member of staff for a specific educational purpose | Phone confiscated for the day and Level 2 issued |
| Yondr Pouch found to be unlocked | Phone confiscated for the day Level 2 issued |

| **Offence**<br>**Years 7-10** | **Level** |
|---|---|
| during school day | |
| Repeated offence of above (x2) | Phone confiscated and Level 3 or Level 4 issued |
| Bringing two phones to school to defeat the system | Level 3 issued |
| Possession of Yondr unlocking station or similar magnet | Level 4 issued |
| Damage to or loss of Yondr Pouch (not reported) | Level 3 issued |
| Damage to or loss of Yondr Pouch (reported) | Repair or replacement cost charged to parents |
| Phone in Yondr Pouch found to be switched on or goes off | Level 2 issued |
| Coordinated/systematic attempt to damage or defeat Yondr system | Level 4 issued |

**Levels List Year 11 pupils**

Pupils in year 11 are advised to use the Yondr mobile phone pouch during the day but are not obligated to do so. Staff will not be checking pouch use where this is on a voluntary basis.

However, Levels also apply under the following circumstances:

| **Offence**<br>**Year 11** | **Level** |
|---|---|
| Phone found switched on and/or outside a schoolbag during school day | Phone confiscated and Level 2 issued |
| Repeated offence of above | Phone confiscated and Level 3 issued |
| Repeated for the third time | Mobile Phone Pouch must be purchased and used |

| Offence<br>Year 11 | Level |
|---|---|
| Phone goes off | Phone confiscated and level 3 issued |
| Coordinated/systematic attempt to get around the no phone school policy | Level 4 issued |

**Forgotten Pouch**

If a pupil forgets their Yondr Pouch, they should report to the School Office by 08:30 to hand in their phone. Phones can then be collected at 16:55. If a pupil consistently forgets their Pouch, they will be reported to their Head of Year and their parents will be contacted to discuss next steps.

**Levels List Sixth Form pupils**

Pupils in Years 12-13 may use their mobile phones in the Sixth Form Centre, or on the direct instruction of a member of staff. They must be switched off during academic lessons, study periods and whilst using the library. A pupil in Years 12-13 who uses their mobile phone outside the 6th form centre will be issued a level and asked to put the mobile phone away.

| Offence<br>Sixth Form | Level |
|---|---|
| Phone found outside a schoolbag during school day anywhere on the school site other than the 6th Form Centre. | Phone confiscated for the day and Level 2 issued |
| Repeated offence of above (x2) | Level 3 issued |
| Coordinated/systematic attempt to get around the no phone school policy | Level 4 issued |

## 5. Mobile Hotspots, Virtual Private Networks and Images

Use of “mobile hotspots” or Virtual Private Networks” (VPNs) is not permitted. **Any** pupil found to be operating a “mobile hotspot” or VPN will receive a Detention after school with their Head of Year. A second offence will lead to a Saturday Detention.

Pupils are not permitted to make recordings (images, videos or sound) of pupils or staff without the direct instruction of a member of staff. Recording a pupil or staff member without their consent will lead to a Friday After School Detention.

## 6. Teams, the internet, social media and email

Communications in these areas have become very much part of our daily routines.

## 7. Communications between pupils and staff

Communications should be appropriate and strictly limited to School accounts. The tone and language of communication should be appropriate. Staff and pupils may ‘chat’ over Teams. Pupil to pupil chat on Teams is not permitted without a member of staff included and should be in relation to school activities.

## 8. Expectations of pupils

Pupils are expected to check their emails and Teams messages daily, at the start of the School day, at 13:50 and after school, and respond appropriately. They should not use School systems as an informal means of communication among their peer group, either during the day nor from home. Pupils are asked to report any concerning behaviour or content to their Tutor or Head of Year. Pupils should use polite and appropriate language in drafting messages; persistent and deliberate inappropriate communication will be escalated as a behavioural matter.

There is an electronic messaging amnesty from 17:00 on weekdays during term time. If a Teams message or email is sent after 17:00, then the sender should not expect a member of staff to see it until the following day. Teachers may still respond in the evening depending on the type of question being asked. Like any query, it may need a very quick response or something more detailed the following day.

Electronic messages received after 17:00 on a Friday during term time week will be responded to by close-of-business the following Monday. Again, the teaching staff

can exercise their judgement depending on the nature of the query, for instance if it concerns co-curricular activities over the weekend.

Electronic communication in the holidays is at the teacher's discretion. Some communication might be desirable in the run up to trial or other examinations. Therefore, in an academic context, the teaching staff will make every effort to ensure that instructions and resources are clearly set out at the end of a term to limit the need for further communication in the holiday.

Pastoral/safeguarding concerns are exceptions to the time limitations described above, as issues may occur during evenings and weekends. However, it is best for personal or sensitive communication not to remain on Teams or email, where a discussion in person at School would be the most appropriate. If a member of staff is contacted through Teams about a pastoral/safeguarding concern, they will contact the Safeguarding Lead and/or SMT member on duty as soon as possible by contacting the school via email or via the SMT duty phone.

Messaging in Teams should be polite, formal and start with 'Hi or Dear Mrs/Mr and a surname'. Once the communication thread is established, comments do not need to be prefaced with 'Mr/Mrs and a surname'. We believe that these are good communication habits for our pupils to be in.

The School's policy with regard to online behaviour can be found on the Bethany School website/policy section.

Failure to adhere to the protocols outlined in this policy could lead to a disciplinary response under both this policy and the School's 'Behaviour and Discipline Policy'.
It must be remembered that the School's IT services are provided for academic and educational purposes – not for games, socialising and other entertainment. The internet must not be taken for granted. If accessed material is thought to be illegal, the police may be consulted.