



03.07.2023

Parent/Carer,

I am writing with information about an important update to our policy on the use of mobile phones in school. As you may know, during the course of this year, we have held a number of engagement events with parents to discuss this issue, and we have also surveyed staff, spoken to students and researched policy and opinion from a number of other schools, locally and nationally.

As a result we have taken the decision to **make our school a phone-free space from September 1st to support children's well-being and improve teaching and learning** using a system called [Yondr](#) – a system that has been implemented in over 1,000 schools across 21 countries to facilitate an engaged learning environment.

You can find more information about the research we have based our decision making on in the FAQ section of this letter (below) - whilst we believe that phones have a huge part to play in life in the modern world, we also know that learning, mental-health and social behaviour improve drastically when students are fully engaged with their teachers and classmates.

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 therefore maintain possession of their phones during the day but will not use them until their pouches are opened at the end of the school day. Their pouch will be considered to be a part of the school uniform and as such students will be required to bring their Yondr pouch to and from school each day and are responsible for their pouch at all times. Any loss or damage to the pouch will be chargeable at £10 per pouch.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly on 01492 593243 or by email on info@aberconwy.conwy.sch.uk, or attend one of our upcoming meetings about the adoption of Yondr **on July 7th 2023 at 3.30pm**. We will also be sharing information on how the system works and why we are adopting it with your children on that day, through a series of special assemblies.

Once the system is implemented, if there is an emergency and you would like to get in contact with your child, please contact your child's guidance mentor on 01492 593243

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

With thanks for your ongoing support,

Yours sincerely,

Ian Gerrard

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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 reach 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 school's reception on 01492 593243 and they will connect you with your child's guidance mentor.

What if my child needs to contact me during the school day?

If your child needs to get in touch with you, they can visit Y Porth – where pastoral staff will either relay a message to you, or will be able to unlock the Yondr pouch so they can make contact themselves.

What if there is a school emergency?

In case of a school emergency, we direct our students to safety first, following our school emergency protocols. We will keep parents informed via the school's usual communication channels.

Will my child's phone be safe?

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

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

The Yondr pouch is the property of the school. If a student damages their Pouch, it will be chargeable at the cost of £10 per pouch. If your child is found using their phone, it will be confiscated for the remainder of the day. If this happens repeatedly, we will ask parents to come and collect it, so we can discuss a way forward with you.

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.

What if my child needs to access their phone as a learning tool in a lesson?

If a teacher wishes students to make use of their phones in a lesson to aid learning (for example to take pictures in a media lesson, or to take a 'Kahoot' quiz in a Science lesson) they will be able to unlock the pouches in their lesson and will ensure that phones are securely locked away again after use.

What will my child do at lunchtimes?

The school will be developing the extra-curricular programme at the start of the September term to ensure there are activities all students can engage with.

My child uses their phone to photograph their timetable – how will they know what lessons they have?

We will be giving every student in the school a 'planner' so they can record important information, including their timetable, so they know where they are going from one lesson to the next.

What are the benefits of a phone free school?

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

Is there any research to support the school's decision?

There is significant evidence that accessing social media through regular access to a mobile device has a negative impact on children's mental health. For example "teens who spend 6 to 9 hours a week on social media are 47% more likely to say they are unhappy than those who use social media less" ([Twenge](#)). "In 36 out of 37 countries loneliness at school has increased since 2012 (when social media began to include approval and like buttons) and have roughly doubled in Europe".

Of course, "smartphones and social media don't just affect individuals. They affect groups. As smartphones became common they transformed peer relationships and the texture of daily life for everyone. It's harder to strike up casual conversation when everyone is staring down at a phone" (Twenge and Haidt)

In a recent report published by ESTYN ("[We don't tell our Teachers](#)"), there were five main themes associated with the mobile phone as identified by the pupils. These were:

- peer pressure to have a high number of online 'friends', 'likes' and comments on profiles
- online bullying, posting hurtful comments about peers, in particular comments about appearance
- sexual objectification of photos of girls by boys; asking for, sending and sharing nude or semi-nude photographs
- catfishing, unsolicited friend requests or demands for nude photos by strangers or those with a fake social media profile
- Negative attitudes towards female characters and/or when girls play digital games.

In their case study on a secondary school in South Wales entitled : [Developing an effective culture for learning](#) : ESTYN noted :

A key element of the 'culture for learning' has been the eradication of mobile phones during the school day. This has been achieved through a consistent approach to any phone use. Pupils and parents understand the consequences of phone use, which has led to very few instances of pupils using their phones in school. There have been significant benefits to this approach, both academically and pastorally, with nearly all lessons having no disruption due to phone use and pupils enjoying board games in groups at lunchtime as opposed to using their devices.