



Our Ref: AF/SWD

10 July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

Mobile Phone Pouches

In July 2019, as the newly appointed Principal of Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy, I introduced measures to control the use of mobile phones in school. Students have since been required to switch off their phones on arrival and are not permitted to use them during the school day except in very specific, supervised circumstances.

For the vast majority of students, this system has worked well over the past seven years. Disruption to lessons, incidents of cyberbullying in school, and inappropriate phone use have all reduced significantly. As a result, behaviour and student engagement have improved, and students consistently tell us that they feel safer in school. Positive social interaction and co-curricular activities have increasingly replaced screen time during the school day.

However, a small minority of students continue to defy these rules, and mobile phone use still presents a challenge to the good order of the school and the safety of others. Such incidents are addressed in line with the school's behaviour policy.

You may be aware that in January 2026 the Department for Education updated its guidance on mobile phone use in schools. This new guidance goes beyond the measures we have successfully implemented to date, meaning that our current approach is no longer fully compliant.

We are therefore updating our procedures. From September 2026, all students (with the exception of those outlined below) will be issued with a lockable phone pouch, which they must bring to school each day. On arrival, students will be required to demonstrate to a member of staff that their phone is placed inside the pouch and securely locked. The pouch is made from a material that blocks phone signals, ensuring that devices cannot be used during the school day.

Students will keep their pouch with them at all times, storing it safely in a blazer pocket or school bag. At the end of the school day, pouches can be unlocked using designated unlocking stations located near school exits. They cannot be opened at any other time.

If a student needs to contact home during the school day—or if you need to contact your child—this can be done via the school office using our main telephone system.

Sixth form students will not be required to use phone pouches and will continue to follow the existing expectations around mobile phone use. In addition, students who require access to their phone for genuine medical reasons will be exempt from this arrangement.

We are confident that this new system will further enhance the quality of education at Lord Lawson by reducing distractions and supporting greater focus in lessons. Many schools, both locally and nationally, are introducing similar measures.

A list of frequently asked questions is included with this letter, which we hope will address any queries you may have. Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to working in partnership with you to further improve your child's experience at Lord Lawson.

Yours faithfully

Dr Andrew Fowler
Principal

Mobile Phone Pouches – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the school introducing phone pouches?

The new system ensures that our school fully meets updated Department for Education guidance while further reducing distractions, improving focus in lessons, and maintaining a safe environment for all students.

2. What is a phone pouch?

A phone pouch is a small, lockable fabric case designed to securely hold a student's mobile phone during the school day. The pouch blocks signals, so phones cannot be used while inside.

3. When will this system start?

The phone pouch system will be introduced from **September 2026**.

4. How will the pouch be used each day?

Students will place their phone in the pouch and lock it on arrival at school, in view of a member of staff. They will keep the pouch with them throughout the day.

5. When can students unlock their phones?

Pouches can only be unlocked at the end of the school day using designated unlocking stations near the school exits.

6. Can the pouch be opened during the school day?

No. Pouches are designed to remain securely locked throughout the school day unless special arrangements have been made by the school.

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

Students can contact home through the school office. Likewise, parents can contact their child via the school's main telephone system if needed.

8. What if there is an emergency?

In the event of an emergency, the school will contact parents directly. Established safeguarding and communication procedures will remain in place.

9. What happens if a student forgets their pouch?

If a student arrives without their pouch, the school will follow its behaviour procedures. Students will hand in their phones to reception, where staff will ensure the phone is securely stored for the day.

10. What happens if a pouch is damaged or lost?

Students are expected to take good care of their pouch. If it is lost or damaged, there may be a charge for replacement.

11. Will the pouch damage my child's phone?

No. The pouches are specifically designed to protect devices and are used widely in schools.

12. Can students still bring phones to school?

Yes. Students may continue to bring phones to school, but they must be secured in the pouch throughout the school day.

13. Are any students exempt?

Yes. Students who require access to their phone for genuine medical reasons will be exempt. These students will be issued with pouches that look similar but will leave their phone accessible. Sixth form students will continue under the existing arrangements: they will not have phone pouches.

14. Will this affect my child's safety travelling to and from school?

No. Students will be able to access their phones immediately at the end of the school day, before leaving the site.

15. Why is this change necessary if current rules are working?

While current arrangements have been effective, the updated system strengthens consistency, removes ambiguity, and ensures full compliance with national guidance.

16. Are other schools doing this?

Yes. Many schools locally and nationally are introducing similar systems to improve learning environments and student wellbeing.

17. What are the benefits for my child?

Students benefit from fewer distractions, improved concentration, stronger social interaction, and a calmer, safer school environment.