



Saffron Walden County High School – Hush Pouch System

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

At Saffron Walden County High School, we are committed to maintaining a calm, focused, and safe learning environment that supports the wellbeing and academic progress of all students. To minimise distractions and promote responsible use of technology, the school is implementing a mobile phone pouch system.

This system requires all mobile phones and smart devices to be securely locked away during the school day. The approach reflects national guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), which recommends that schools prohibit the use of mobile phones during school hours to enhance focus, reduce anxiety, and improve behaviour.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Hush pouch and how does it work?

How huSH works...



When entering the school premises, students slide their phone into the huSH pouch.



Once pushed into the pouch, simply engage the locking pin.



When exiting the premises, click pouch open at a huSH unlocking station.

A Hush pouch is a lockable protective pouch that mobile phones and other smart devices can be placed into. Each student will purchase a Hush pouch to use each day at school.

When students arrive at school, they will be asked to turn off their phones, place their phones inside their Hush pouch, and lock it. Members of staff will greet students as they usually do as they arrive at school, and students will quickly show our staff that their Hush pouch has been locked. The Hush pouches can only be unlocked using specific devices that members of staff will have access to and will be made available to students at the end of the school day.



During the school day, the pouches will remain locked, meaning it will not be possible to be tempted by the distractions and notifications from the phone. In line with our current processes, parents should contact the School Office if they need to contact their child or make alternative urgent arrangements during the school day.

As students leave school, they will quickly press their Hush pouch into one of the unlocking devices and be able to take their phone out and use it again.

What evidence supports this approach?

Government guidance and educational research indicate that limiting mobile phone use during the school day improves concentration, reduces bullying and anxiety, and enhances academic outcomes. Studies such as those by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and King's College London (2023) support a direct link between reduced screen time and improved mental health and learning focus.

Schools that have adopted this policy have been extremely pleased with the outcomes; pupils are showing greater levels of independence and less anxiety. Schools who have been using the phone pouches for a while have identified the following progress:

- 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
- 90% noticed a significant improvement in the wellbeing of students over time

Are students aware of what a Hush pouch is and the expectations of use?

Yes, students have been advised of the implementation through assemblies and have been informed about what a Hush pouch is and the consequences of not using one, although their understanding of the consequences can vary. They are typically educated that a Hush pouch is a lockable pouch to store phones and devices, and the consequences for non-compliance range from a phone being confiscated for two days and collected at the end of the two days to having to pay for an intentionally damaged pouch. To support their understanding, students will have further demonstrations and opportunities to practice using the pouches system. There will be a staggered implementation process starting from the 2nd June 2026.

What devices does this policy apply to?

The policy applies to all mobile phones, smartphones, smartwatches, headphones, and any other device capable of connecting to the internet or a mobile network. All such devices must be stored in a lockable phone pouch during the school day.

Can students use headphones?

No. Headphones, earphones, and earbuds are considered connected devices and are therefore included in the phone pouch policy. They must be stored in the phone pouch during the school day.

How does the pouch system work?

Students will place their phone (and any connected devices such as earbuds or smartwatches) into their pouch upon arrival at school. The pouch is locked using a secure magnetic seal that cannot be opened without a designated unlocking device. Unlocking stations will be available at the end of the school day and at specific points, such as Reception, for approved early departures.



What if my child does not bring their phone into school at all?

If your child does not bring any connective devices into school, you can apply for an exemption card. By applying for this card, you are informing the school that your child will never bring a device into school for the foreseeable future.

What if my child wants to bring in their phone on a rare occasion?

On the day(s) a child brings their phone into school it will need to be locked in a pouch. On the days students do not bring their phone into school they will need to declare this at the Hush desk in the Atrium when they arrive to school. If a student arrives late to school, they will need to do the same at the main school's Reception.

What happens if the pouch is lost or damaged?

If a student loses or deliberately damages their pouch (i.e. by attempting to force it open or adding decoration or graffiti on the pouch), parents or carers will be required to pay the replacement cost of £15.00.

What happens if the pouch is faulty, how long is the response time for the company to fix it? Can the school still open a faulty pouch?

If there is a manufacture fault to a pouch it will be replaced by the school on the day we are notified. We are still able to open any faulty pouches. There will be duty staff at the start and end of each school day to support students if they have any issues with their pouches.

How long will parents/carers be left waiting for the students to unlock their pouches considering the number of children in the school?

It takes a second to unlock a pouch and there are 31 unlockable magnets strategically positioned at both entry and exit points of the school site to maintain the flow of movement.

The pouches are unfortunately identical – is there a way personalise the pouch?

Pouches will be distributed to students with their names written on them. Each pouch has a large orange rectangle for names to be highlighted.

Where should the pouch be kept during the day?

Students should keep their locked pouch in a secure location such as their bag or locker. We do not recommend them keeping the pouches in their pockets.

What if a student forgets their pouch?

Students who forget their pouch will be flagged using a database system and students will be directed to report to the Atrium at the start of the school day. Students will hand their phone/devices in at the Hush desk where their items will be locked away for the duration of the school day. Student will be given a notification card stating that their items have been handed in. At the end of the school day students will report back to the Atrium to hand their notification card back in and collect their items.

What if a student forgets to unlock their phone at the end of the day?

Students who accidentally take home a locked pouch can return to school Reception to have it unlocked. Alternatively, they can enjoy a phone-free evening. If a student fails to unlock their pouch out of school hours/holidays, you may use a designated unlocking station which will be accessible on site out of hours.



Can the pouch be opened during the school day?

No. Students may not unlock their pouch during the school day unless they have explicit permission for a legitimate reason such as a medical need or an early departure authorised by staff.

Are there any exemptions for medical reasons?

In very limited circumstances, students with medical devices such as continuous glucose monitors may be issued with a medical adaptation pouch. This special pouch allows for necessary signals to pass through while keeping the device secure. Evidence of medical need must be provided by a healthcare professional, and arrangements will be agreed as part of the student's health plan and risk assessment.

What if a student refuses to use the pouch or hides their phone?

Refusal to comply with this policy will be treated as a deliberate breach of the Behaviour Policy. As a consequence, the phone will be confiscated for a period of time (two days) as outlined in the Behaviour Policy. If the period of confiscation falls over the weekend the phone will be returned at the end of the following school day.

Repeated non-compliance will also result in the student being placed in the Isolation Base where they will complete a reflection booklet to learn about the impact of mobile phone usage and help them meet expectations moving forward. In cases of repeated failure to meet expectations, the school may confiscate a mobile phone or communication devices for up to seven days. This measure will only be used as a last resort and will always be undertaken in active partnership with parents to ensure the most appropriate support is in place for the student.

What happens if a phone is seen on site during the school day?

If a student's phone or smart device is seen or heard during school hours, it will be confiscated immediately. The length of confiscation will depend on the stage of the offence, as outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy. Parents and carers will be required to collect the device from school.

What happens if a student brings two phones?

There is no need for a student to bring more than one device to school. Any additional phone or device that is not declared will be treated as a prohibited item and confiscated.

Can staff search students for mobile phones?

Yes. Under Sections 89–91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and DfE statutory guidance, authorised staff have the power to search a student or their possessions if there are reasonable grounds to suspect they are carrying a prohibited item, including an undeclared mobile phone.

Random pouch checks and student searches will be carried out. Searches consist of the following, a blazer and bag search and in some cases the use of a wand metal detector.

Who should parents contact if they need to reach their child during the school day?

Parents and carers should contact the main school Reception or the relevant Year Office. Messages will be passed promptly to students. Students will not be permitted to use their personal devices during the day to make or receive calls.

How can students contact home if needed?

Students who need to contact home during the school day may do so via the Year Office or Reception, where staff will assist. In exceptional cases, staff may allow the student to use a school phone.



How does the system work for school trips and after-school clubs?

For school trips and sporting fixtures, the arrangements for mobile phones will depend on the nature of the visit, destination, and supervision requirements. Trip leaders will determine whether phones may be carried, kept in pouches, or collected for safekeeping during the trip. PE staff and trip organisers will carry portable unlocking devices for emergencies. For residential trips, specific arrangements will be shared in advance with parents. For after-school clubs, phones will not be able to be used and pouches will be unlocked as normal as they leave the school grounds.

What if a phone is damaged while in the pouch?

The pouches are designed to be durable and padded. The school is not liable for damage to phones stored within them, in accordance with DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance (2024). Students remain responsible for their personal belongings.

What happens if a student arrives late to school?

Students who arrive late to school, will be required to sign in at Reception, if a student does not have a valid reason for being late, they will be issued with a lunchtime detention on the same day.

Students arriving late will be asked to place their phone in their pouch and lock it. Reception staff will have a portable unlocking device to unlock pouches when needed.

If a student does not have their pouch their phone will be handed in at Reception and they will be issued with a notification card. The student will be able to collect their phone at the end of the school day in the Atrium.

If a student states that they do not have any devices on them this will be recorded on our data base system.

If a child has an exemption card because they never bring a device into school they will sign in and go straight to their lesson.

Is there likely to be any form of recycling scheme in place?

Yes. Parents will be asked to return their Hush pouches to the school once their child has finished Year 11. The pouches will then be collected by the manufacturer. Parts of the pouches will then be recycled.