



The Astley Cooper School

Responsibility • Respect • Resilience

June 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

Changes to mobile device policy

Further to my letter dated May 2024 consulting with parents/carers on the plan for mobile phones for September, I am writing to inform you of the outcome of that consultation and to confirm changes to our mobile phone and personal devices policy. All changes will come into effect from September 2024, the beginning of the new academic year.

Consultation

We received 71 responses to the consultation which included a number of useful questions and I have included answers to some of these questions later in this letter. The majority of comments were supportive and understood the need for change with some incredibly positive comments about the suggested change being really welcomed especially as the focus of this initiative is to improve student's mental health and remove distractions to learning.

The highest percentage of responses were opting for students to put their phone into secure phone pouches during the day. Additionally, 74% of parents agreed with the tariff of arrangements for the return of a confiscated mobile phone although I would hope that all students will be able to abide by the rules and there will be no need to follow this process. There were also comments relating to students who may have exceptional medical needs who may need access to a mobile phone (i.e. an app that monitors diabetic glucose levels). We have considered all of these valid comments and have made some alterations to the policy.

Policy from September 2024

Our policy will change so that students have to put their mobile phone into a secure pouch before they enter the school gates. The phone pouches will be provided by the school for all students to use and information about the pouches can be found [here](#). Students should bring their phone pouch to school each day as part of their basic equipment and when their phone is in the pouch, it will be stored in their own school bag. Students will be able to unlock the phone pouch as they leave the school site and then keep the pouch in their bag overnight. Each pouch will have an identification number and students will have to replace the phone pouch if it is lost or damaged.

If phones or headphones are seen out of the phone pouch inside the school building, without the permission of a senior member of staff, they will be confiscated. This will mean that students are allowed to use them as they walk to and from school and can communicate their safe arrival and return from school but then not allowed to use them during the school day. If a parent/carers needs to contact their child or share an important message, they should do this by calling the main school office.

It will be down to the organiser of any school trip to decide if mobile devices are allowed on the trip and how they can be used while on the trip or visit.



Headteacher:
Sam Orsborne
St Agnells Lane, Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7HL 01442394141
admin@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk
[Twitter@Astley_Cooper](https://twitter.com/Astley_Cooper)



The Astley Cooper School

Responsibility • Respect • Resilience

If a device is confiscated the following tariff of arrangements for the return of the item will be established:

- First confiscation – returned to the student at the end of the day
- Second confiscation – returned to the student at the end of the next school day (1 school day)
- Third confiscation - student banned from bringing a phone into the school building for the remainder of the half term. Parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss phone use with a member of the senior team

Where a parent/carer feels there is an exceptional reason why a student may need access to a mobile phone during the day (e.g. on medical grounds) they may apply in writing to the Headteacher providing evidence and requesting special dispensation. Cases will be considered on an individual basis.

Post 16 students and mobile devices

Arrangements for Post 16 students will be different to the rest of the school. This is in light of the evidence that at The Astley Cooper School these students do use the devices responsibly and sensibly to aid learning rather than for social interaction. Post 16 students will be permitted to use their devices in the study and communal areas of the sixth form and in lessons under the instruction of a teacher. Post 16 students are not to have any devices or headphones visible or heard in any other areas.

Yours sincerely

Sam Orsborne
Headteacher



Headteacher:
Sam Orsborne
St Agnells Lane, Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7HL 01442394141
admin@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk
[Twitter@Astley_Cooper](https://twitter.com/Astley_Cooper)



The Astley Cooper School

Responsibility • Respect • Resilience

FAQ from the consultation process

Q) It is important that students have their phones and are able to contact their parents/carers on the way to school and after the school day is over.

A) Students are able to use their phones to communicate with parents/carers until they reach the internal school gate. They can also unlock the phone pouches as soon as they leave at the end of the day to then communicate on the way home.

Q) There is a large amount of students so there is the potential for a long queue to do this in the morning - I wouldn't want my child to risk being late to registration because of lengthy queues and there would be no way of knowing how busy the queue is.

A) There will be 10 locking/unlocking stations inside the main school perimeter and I believe this will give all students enough time to put their phones into their phone pouch before coming into the school site. I will continue to review this and purchase additional stations if necessary.

Q) What about children who use their phones for medical reasons?

A) Where a parent/carer feels there is an exceptional reason why a student may need access to a mobile phone during the day (e.g. on medical grounds) they may apply in writing to the Headteacher providing evidence and requesting special dispensation. Cases will be considered on an individual basis.

Q) What about the lessons where students may need to use their phones?

A) This system will allow teachers to plan lessons where students can use their phones for investigating content or taking part in learning quizzes. Staff will be able to unlock phone pouches for this reason and then ensure that all students return their phone to the pouch afterwards.



Headteacher:
Sam Orsborne
St Agnells Lane, Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7HL 01442394141
admin@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk
[Twitter@Astley_Cooper](https://twitter.com/Astley_Cooper)