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## HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL

An Academy Trust

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June 2024

Dear parents and carers

The benefits of technology and particularly smart devices do not need enumeration; huge sums of money are poured into expounding their potential - it is now cliché to say that the average smartphone has more computing power than the computers which took humans to the moon.

That said, for some time now there has been growing unease amongst mental health professionals, sociologists and educators about the power of mobile phones and other smart devices. This unease has not just been rooted in our concerns about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of our children; it began before then and has gathered pace, seemingly resistant to our attempts to alleviate it. The [PISA data](#) suggests that the western world has seen a decline, not just in educational outcomes since 2012, but reports students feeling increasingly lonely in school - the blame seems to lie with smartphones and their effect on young minds. The standard ripostes to these warnings are ones that have been deployed before by huge corporations; they are the argument of neutrality - mobile phones are just neutral tools, or that the complexity of the factors affecting mental health mean that it is overly simplistic to make the correlation-causation link. These two arguments have been expertly dealt with by greater minds than mine and the work of [Jonathan Haidt](#), the [Safescreens campaign](#) and [Policy Exchange](#) make very compelling cases for “effective bans” on smartphones in schools.

Mindful of the above, you will have seen that the Government issued [non-statutory guidance](#) inviting schools to ban them - there were many startled looks from schools because there are very few if any that permit unfettered mobile phone usage. As ever at HBS we intend to go ‘beyond Outstanding’ and will introduce an effective phone ban by introducing [Yondr Pouches](#) for all pupils in Year 7 to 11 and then rolling this into Sixth Form in the academic year 25/26. We have wrestled with it for some time and have been buoyed by many parents writing in or meeting with Tim or I to express enthusiastic agreement with this course of action. The Trustees were in full agreement with it and some have been in to offer suggestions, volunteer for the roll-out and point us in the direction of organisations and research that support this change.

Under cover of this letter is a copy of the Yondr Process. Many of you will already have heard of Yondr - they are in over 3,000 schools worldwide and invite you to join an ecosystem which commits to creating phone-free spaces. Testimonials from their partner schools (even the students) provide real proof of the impact of creating such a space, and they also bring with

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Head Teacher: Mr T E Bennett

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**Ofsted  
Outstanding  
2021/2022**

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them nearly a decade of experience in dealing with the cunning of teenagers - think dummy phones, breaking pouches open. We have every confidence that they are very well placed to work with us.

We intend to launch it the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> July to soften the blow and, of course, beta test it before the return in September. On 15<sup>th</sup> July there will be a series of launch presentations to each year group by Yondr professionals and closer to the time we will be in touch with further detail about this.

We recognize that there will inevitably be a flight to Chromebooks and, whilst they too have proved invaluable and are indeed a useful tool, we will be doing further work around striking a balance and curating the vast amounts of information available through those portals. Mr Monks and Mr Rayner and their Teaching and Learning team will be working on this over the coming year.

In the meantime, please do continue to reach out to us. If you want to share any further thoughts or suggestions. I can be reached on [dajagbonna@hitchinboys.co.uk](mailto:dajagbonna@hitchinboys.co.uk).

Yours faithfully

**Mr D Ajagbonna**  
**Deputy Head Teacher**



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# Yondr

*Creating a phone free space*

Summer 2024

# Quick quiz



- What is Smartphone addiction?  
The inability to cut back on excessive mobile phone use.
- What is Nomophobia?  
The fear of being without your phone.
- What is Ringxiety?  
Constantly checking the device for missed calls and texts.
- Textaphrenia?  
The fear that you can't send or receive calls and texts.
- What are Phantom vibrations?  
The belief that your phone is alerting you when it isn't.

# Rationale



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## Why are we doing this?

1. To improve the mental wellbeing of our pupils and create a truly phone-free environment.
2. To reduce the significant incidents of unkindness which are “phone borne” between students and towards staff.
3. According to the DfE 97% of 12 years olds now own a mobile phone.

## Research suggests:

- Smartphones are highly addictive, particularly to the teenage brain.
- Smartphones can expose children to harmful content: pornography, grooming, self-harm, bullying and extremism.
- The Policy Exchange’s report found that secondary schools in England where a ban on mobile phones was in place had better GCSE outcomes for children.

# Non-Statutory guidance from DfE



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The DfE are advocating an approach that falls into one of the following four categories:

1. No mobile phones on the school premises
2. Mobile phones handed into staff on arrival at school
3. Mobile phones kept in a secure location, which students do not access during the day.
4. **Mobile phones are never used, seen or heard during the school day.**

# Form time daily check



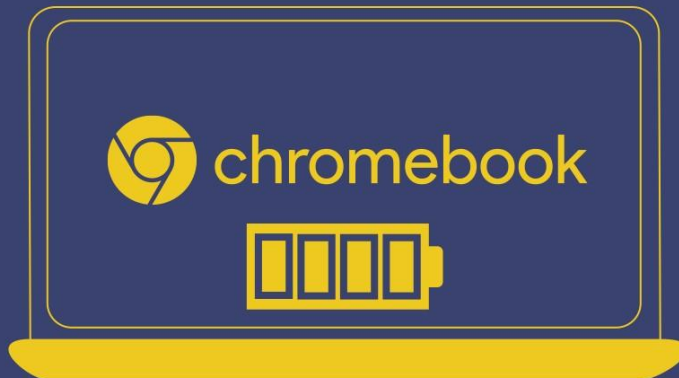
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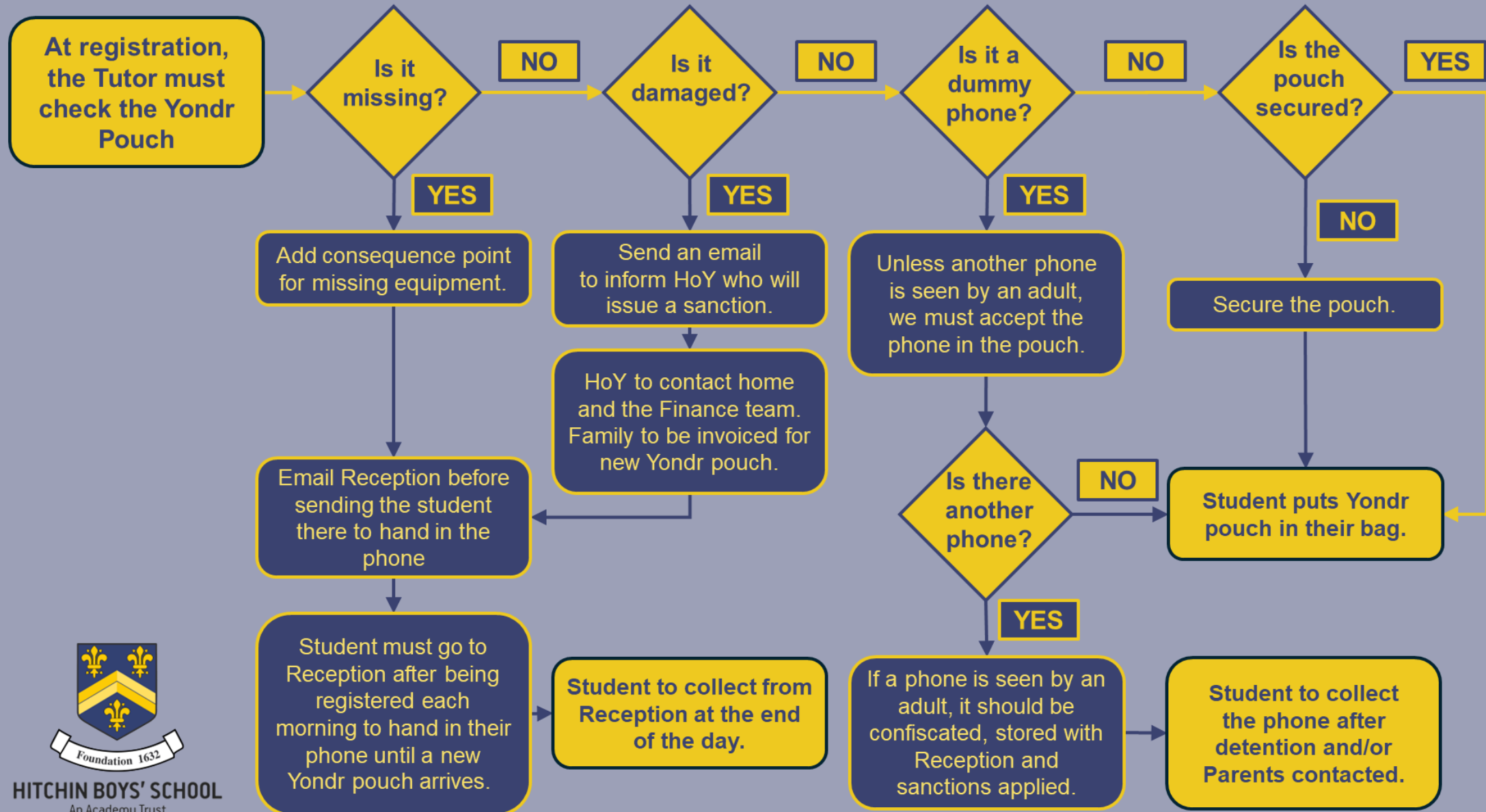
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## Daily Equipment:

Pen, pencil, pencil sharpener, rubber, ruler, scientific calculator, headphones, fully charged chromebook & Yondr pouch.



# Tutor process





# Student process

Form Time - Every day

## LOCKING

Before you come through the School Gates you should **switch your phone off and put it** (and other smart devices) **in the Yondr Pouch and lock it.**

Or in Form Time under the supervision of your form tutor **you must turn off your phone/smart watch and place in your Yondr pouch and press firmly to lock.**

If you forget your pouch you will be sanctioned and sent to reception to hand your phone in for the day.

End of P5 - Every day

## UNLOCKING

At the end of Period 5, make your way to the **Grammar School Walk exits** to unlock your Yondr pouch.

**Remove your phone and/or smart watch and close the case firmly**

Your numbered case remains in your possession until the end of each Academic Year.

Arriving late / leaving early?

## SIGNING IN/OUT

When you sign out/in at reception they will lock/unlock your Pouch for you.



# Student questions

What if I use my phone?

## CONSEQUENCES

**1st time:** Your phone will be confiscated and a 1 hour detention will be set for the following day (3.40-4.40pm).

**Your phone will not be returned to you until you have sat the detention.**

**2nd time:** A C3F Detention will be issued and the **School will keep your phone until you have sat the detention.**

**3rd time:** **The School will keep your phone for 5 school days**, at which point parents or carers will need to attend a collection meeting with your Head of Year.

If this persists then it becomes a matter of defiance and is subject to the sanctions and behaviour policy of HBS.

What if I vandalise my case?

## CONSEQUENCES

The **Yondr pouch belongs to the school** and is loaned to you for use during your time at HBS.

**Your numbered case remains in your possession until the end of each Academic Year.**

If you purposefully damage the case or graffiti it, you will be required to pay for a new one as well and serve a sanction for damage to School property.

The cost for a replacement case is £30.

Urgent messages home

## CONTACT

If you need to contact home urgently, go to Reception who will unlock your phone or allow you to use a school phone.

If your parent/carer need to contact you urgently they can do so by calling the School **on 01462 432181**

Reception staff can then get the message to you.



# FAQs



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➤ **What if a student needs their phone to record work/ take pictures for NEA?**

Students can have their phones unlocked during a lesson by the Head of Department as long as the teacher does the 'daily check' routine at the end.

➤ **What about Diabetic students who need their phones to check their levels?**

They have Velcro pouches and can check those on a strictly as necessary basis

➤ **How will the unlocking take place? Will this cause a crush? Is it H&S compliant?**

Staff will be present on the gate to supervise the unlocking and move students on quickly.

➤ **How will students/ staff be prepared for this rollout?**

We have been drip feeding the information out, a newsletter header and then further letters will go home to parents. We will have staff on hand during the first week of introduction to help students get used to the unlocking system.

➤ **Will Sixth Form be included?**

Yes - from 2025/26 in the interim any phones seen in non-sixth form areas will result in a detention.

➤ **I have seen numerous videos online regarding burning / using a pen or magnet to open it - how can we stop this?**

We can't. Damaged pouches will be paid for by students and mobile phones handed in each day. They could damage their own property (phone) if they smash the phone or burn it. Ultimately, we will manage non-compliance with the policy, like we do all other issues.