

Dear Parents and Carers,

The UCL Academy Phone-Free Policy is changing

At The UCL Academy we are committed to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive. Our young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living more of their lives online. This presents many exciting opportunities - but also academic, emotional and social challenges, which can be very harmful to young people.

As such, we already have in place our phone-free policy, whereby students must never use or handle their mobile phone whilst on site during school hours. An extension to this is in place for the current Year 7 where they are restricted to only being allowed to bring on site a "dumb" or "brick" phone, as opposed to a smartphone, which the current Years 8 to 13 are allowed to bring.

From 1st September 2026, we are amending our phone-free policy to ensure we are completely in line with new government statutory guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools) that states all schools with students aged between 5 and 16 years old must be mobile phone-free environments. **The Academy will now require all students in years 7 to 11 to own a lockable phone pouch**, which will further prevent any use of mobile phones and smart devices during the school day.

How the Policy Works

Each student / family of a student must purchase a phone pouch from the Academy. The phone pouch is a secure, lockable case for storing personal devices. Students are responsible for bringing their pouch to and from the Academy each day and keeping it in good condition.

1. **Upon arrival:** Students power off all smart technology including their mobile phones and smart watches, place all devices in their pouch, and lock it in front of a teacher.
2. **During the day:** Students keep their locked pouch in their bag or locker.
3. **At dismissal:** Students unlock their pouch at designated stations to retrieve their devices. The phone (and pouch) is taken home by the student ready for the next school day.

This process is quick, simple, and will be supervised by staff as part of our daily routine.

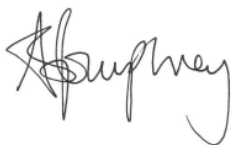
Staying Connected

With student safety as our top priority, we will follow our standard safety protocols in the event of an emergency. If you need to reach your child during the Academy day, please contact our reception team on 020 7449 3080 (option 0).

We know that change takes partnership and we are here to support a smooth transition for your family. To walk through the policy changes and answer your questions, we will be hosting an online information session on **Thursday 9th July from 4:00pm to 4:30pm**. The link to the session is meet.google.com/vxv-shxk-ozq.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to create a focused, present, and positive school environment for every student.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Pomphrey
Principal

Frequently Asked Questions

The phone pouches and how to purchase them

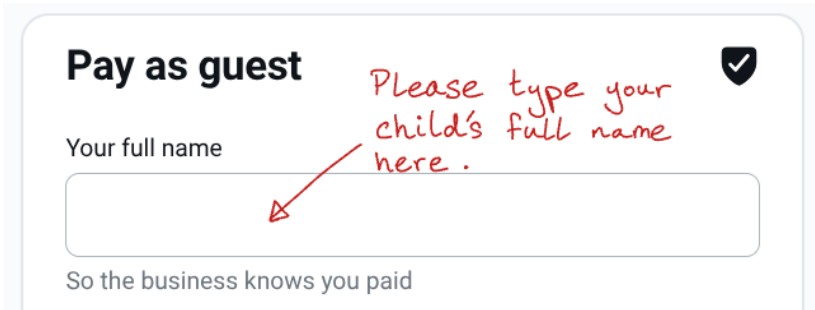
How much do the phone pouches cost?

The cost of each pouch is **£18**. Students who are on **Free School Meals** will be eligible to purchase the pouches at a **reduced cost of £15**.

How do I purchase a phone pouch?

The Academy has several ways in which the phone pouches can be purchased:

- If a student is already enrolled at the Academy, pouches can be purchased through **ParentPay**, in the same way that a replacement tie, lanyard or ID card can be purchased.
- Families of incoming Year 7 students currently in Year 6, or of new students in other year groups enrolling in September 2026, can purchase a pouch through any of the following ways:
 1. Bank transfer to the Academy's bank account using the following details:
 - **Bank Name:** Barclays Bank
 - **Sort Code:** 20-46-81
 - **Account number:** 90511498
 - **Reference:** Your child's full name
 2. Payment in person at the Academy using a Credit/Debit Card
 3. Payment online using the below links. Where it asks for "**Your full name**" under the "Pay as guest" heading, please type **your child's full name**.



The screenshot shows a 'Pay as guest' payment form. It has a title 'Pay as guest' and a small shield icon with a checkmark. Below the title is a label 'Your full name' and an empty text input field. A red handwritten note says 'Please type your child's full name here.' with an arrow pointing to the input field. At the bottom of the form, it says 'So the business knows you paid'.

- a. Link to pay the full price of £18 - pay.sumup.com/b2c/QXTBHFY5
- b. Link to pay the reduced price of £15 for students on Free School Meals - pay.sumup.com/b2c/QIXP81KS

If you have more than one child attending, then please make **separate** payments for **each** child.

Unfortunately, the Academy **will not** be able to accept cash payments.

When do purchases need to be made?

Purchases must be made **before 1st September 2026** so that we can prepare the pouches for students when the new academic year starts.

I already have a child at the Academy and I have another one entering the Academy in 2026/2027. Can I use ParentPay to purchase a pouch for both of them?

In order to ensure we can track exactly which child has a phone pouch, ParentPay can only be used for students currently enrolled at the Academy. New incoming students not yet enrolled will need to use one of the alternative methods described previously.

I am having difficulty making payment through any of the methods listed. What should I do?

Please contact our finance team on 020 7449 3080 (Option 5) or email them at finance@uclacademy.co.uk and they will endeavour to help you. If emailing, please provide screenshots of any error messages you encounter during the payment process.

I am unable to pay the full amount in one transaction. Can payments be broken up across several months?

Please contact our finance team on 020 7449 3080 (Option 5) or email them at finance@uclacademy.co.uk and they will discuss a possible payment plan with you. Please note, this service will be reserved for families with children on Free School Meals and cannot be put in place for all families.

I am not sure if my child has / will have Free School Meals at the Academy. What should I do?

If your child is already enrolled at the Academy, then please contact our finance team on 020 7449 3080 (Option 5) or email them at finance@uclacademy.co.uk and they will let you know. You can also check with your local authority. You may already have correspondence from them with the information you need.

If your child is about to join the Academy in September 2026, then you can check with your child's current school. You can also check with your local authority. You may already have correspondence from them with the information you need.

For students still in primary school where all children are automatically entitled to free school meals, so you may not have made an application for financial support, please contact your school or local authority for information on how to apply. For residents of Camden, you can apply using this link - www.camden.gov.uk/free-school-meals.

Ideally, please purchase your pouch once you are sure of your child's free school meals status. **If there is any doubt, or it is getting close to the purchase deadline, then please pay the full price and the Academy will refund you** if your application for free school meals is later successful.

How does a student receive their phone pouch once purchased?

Once payment has been received, students will receive their phone pouch on their year group's first day of the new academic year in September 2026.

What happens if a pouch is not purchased for a student?

The student will **not** be allowed to bring their phone into the Academy.

What happens if a pouch is purchased after 1st September 2026?

The student will receive their pouch in the same way as they receive a replacement tie or lanyard. They inform reception that a pouch has been paid for and the reception team will support them with obtaining their pouch from the finance team. The next day, the student will be allowed to bring their phone to the Academy.

What brand of pouch is the Academy going to use?

The Academy tested and reviewed 5 different brands of pouch. We looked for a reputable brand that had an easy to use durable pouch with a strong and safe locking mechanism and a reliable service support team behind it. The Academy decided to proceed with **Yondr** pouches (www.veryondr.com). For over a decade, Yondr has supported schools in more than 40 countries to build healthier, more engaging school cultures. Their pouch-based program, combined with hands-on guidance and dedicated support, has led to powerful results:

- 86% reported improved safety and student wellbeing
- 84% saw increased engagement in class
- 44% reduced behavioural referrals

Were there any cheaper phone pouches or alternatives?

There were cheaper pouches and cases from other brands. However, the Academy felt they were either of a lower quality or had a design not suited to our setting, and would likely cost parents and carers more money in the long term.

Is the Academy making any profit from the sale of phone pouches?

The Academy is **not** making any profit from the sale of phone pouches. The Academy is buying the phone pouches at a discounted price of £18 per pouch from Yondr and charging families the same amount. The reduced price of £15 for students on Free School Meals means that the Academy is actually subsidising the purchase of these pouches.

Can siblings or friends share one pouch?

Due to the need to supervise each child placing their phone in their phone pouch and locking it, it would be impractical to manage this if more than one child was using the same pouch. Additionally, while the pouches are big enough to fit a phone, smartwatch and earpods, students may struggle to fit another phone and accessories into it.

Are these signal blocking phone pouches?

The phone pouches do not block phone signals. This is for a safeguarding reason and a financial one. Mobile phones, if left powered on in signal blocking pouches, can consume more power than normal while looking for a signal. This could lead to a situation where a student has a phone with little or no power when they leave the Academy at the end of the day, leaving them without any means of communication or other necessary online services while travelling home.

By having students switch off their phones prior to placing it in their pouch and locking it, we can reduce the likelihood of this situation arising. This then removes the need for signal blocking pouches, which cost more. Additionally, the effectiveness of signal blocking pouches degrades over time with wear and tear. Hence, not having signal blocking pouches results in lower costs for families in the short and long term.

Are the current Year 7, when they enter Year 8, or the new Year 7 cohort coming from Year 6, still restricted from bringing smartphones to the Academy and only allowed to bring “dumb” or “brick” phones?

No. With the introduction of the phone pouches, all students are able to bring any phone, so long as it fits within the pouch. However, the Academy still recommends parents and carers to think carefully about phone choices and look into phones and services that help parents and carers have greater control and monitoring over the content their children can access. This website (onecollectivepower.co.uk/child-friendly-alternatives) has more information and device recommendations. Feedback from Year 7 parents has been overwhelmingly positive about the impact on their child not having a smartphone or device.

Will Sixth Form students need to purchase a phone pouch?

The Academy actively promotes greater independent learning at Sixth Form. As such, we want our Year 12 and Year 13 students to make the most of their scheduled study periods. We recognise that technology and online access can help with this, hence, while we do have a fleet of Chromebooks that Sixth Form students can borrow during study periods, we will also continue to allow them to use their phones.

However, there will be stricter enforcement of the current rules on Sixth Form phone use, notably:

- Phones can only be used in the Sixth Form study area and in lessons where the teacher permits it.
- Phones cannot be used or seen in any other part of the school, including the stairwells, corridors and canteens. Sixth Formers must also not walk around the Academy wearing earpods or headphones.
- Sixth Formers will face sanctions and phone/device confiscation, to be collected by parents/carers, if they do not adhere to the rules.

My child already has a lockable phone pouch or case. Can they use this and not buy a new one from the Academy?

The Academy will need to inspect the pouch or case to see if it is suitable, does the same job as the Yondr pouch and will work with our unlocking stations and devices. A pouch or case which the Academy cannot unlock will not be approved. The decision to approve the pouch or case will come from the Principal only.

Morning and Afternoon Procedures

How quick is the unlocking process?

The unlocking process is quick and students typically do not need to break stride. While students are getting used to unlocking pouches, staff will be on hand with mobile unlocking stations to stop queues forming in the first few weeks. Additional stations will be added if required.

What if my child arrives late or needs to be dismissed early?

Reception will have an unlocking device for students arriving late or leaving early.

Will my child's phone be safe?

Students are in possession of their phone - in their pouch - for the entire school day. We will instruct students to store the pouch safely in their bags or lockers. While the pouch will provide some protection itself, it is not a protective case, so students should continue to handle their devices with care.

What happens if a student forgets to open their pouch at the end of the day?

In Yondr's experience, this rarely happens. All students funnel past the unlocking stations at exit points and typically want their phones back. If a student arrives home with their phone still in the pouch, they can either return to the Academy to unlock it or enjoy a phone-free evening.

What happens if a student forgets to bring in their pouch?

The student's phone will be confiscated and securely stored in reception. The student will have a 20 minute detention and parents/carers will be contacted and reminded of the procedures and will have to collect the phone from the Academy. If the pouch is repeatedly forgotten, then the student could face higher sanctions of Senior Leader 60 minute detentions, seclusion and even suspension. We suggest students keep pouches in their school bags, and they remain locked when they are not in use.

Daily Pouch Use

What if my child needs their phone for medical reasons?

We have an alternative solution for the small number of students who require their phones for medical reasons (e.g. diabetes and medical shunts). We will be in touch with these families if they have informed us of their medical condition.

My child currently does not bring a phone to school; how will this work for them?

If they never intend to bring a phone to school, then parents/carers will need to complete [this form](https://forms.gle/UB11VCXvudFWEpYs5) - <https://forms.gle/UB11VCXvudFWEpYs5> - and return it to the Academy.

What happens if a phone is seen outside of a pouch?

If a student is found in possession of a phone or smart device outside their pouch on the Academy site, the device will be confiscated and securely stored in reception. The student will have a 20 minute detention and parents/carers will be contacted and reminded of the procedures and will have to collect the phone from the Academy. If the phone is repeatedly seen outside of a pouch, then the student could face higher sanctions of Senior Leader 60 minute detentions, seclusion and even suspension.

Bag searches may be conducted, in line with the Academy's search policy, if staff have concerns that a student has a mobile phone on them that has not been placed into their pouch.

What happens if a phone is not turned off in a locked pouch and the phone rings or makes other noises?

The phone or smart device will be confiscated and securely stored in reception. The student will have a 20 minute detention and parents/carers will be contacted and reminded of the procedures and will have to collect the phone from the Academy. If the phone is heard on more occasions or found not to be off, then the student could face higher sanctions of Senior Leader 60 minute detentions, seclusion and even suspension.

What if the pouch gets damaged?

Any attempt to tamper with the Yondr system, including use or possession of high-strength magnets, will be treated as a serious offence. The student's devices will be confiscated until

collected by a parent or carer, and the student could face sanctions, including detentions, seclusion and even suspension.

If accidental damage occurs, students must report it immediately. If damage is discovered during checks and has not been reported, it may be considered intentional and the student could face sanctions. Students are advised to lock their pouch when they leave school to avoid any accidental damage.

Damaged pouches that are no longer effective will need to be replaced by the student / family at the same cost of £18 (£15 for students on Free School Meals). The Academy reserves the right to determine whether a damaged pouch is still effective or not.

We will be conducting random spot checks over the full academic year to assess the condition of the pouches.

How will students know all the Academy's rules on mobile phones, smart devices and phone pouches?

All students will receive information during house time and assemblies prior to the end of this Academic year, again on their year group's first day of school in September and in the first several weeks of September. Reminders will continue at various points throughout the Academic year.

Emergencies

What if there is a school emergency?

In an emergency, the priority is for students to follow school safety procedures under staff guidance. Unauthorised phone use during such situations may:

- Delay emergency responses
- Spread misinformation
- Put students and staff at increased risk
- Disrupt coordinated safeguarding efforts

Emergency communications will be managed through the Academy.

What if I need to contact my child during the Academy day?

Parents/Carers should continue to contact the Academy to pass on messages to their child(ren).

Further questions

I have a question that has not been answered in this letter. How do I get it answered?

Please contact the Academy on 020 7449 3080 (option 0) or email enquiries@uclacademy.co.uk and we will endeavour to answer your query.