

HuSH Pouches FAQs

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What is the aim of this scheme?

Our aim is to provide our students with the best possible environment for learning. As a ‘device-free school’, we are addressing the negative impact of mobile devices on mental health, concentration, and social interactions. We are committed to fostering an environment where every student can achieve their potential. Our values of Humility, Intuition, and Passion are at the heart of what we do.

Additionally, the 2023 National Parent Survey found that parents’ top concern for their children’s mental health and wellbeing was the use of mobile phone devices. This aligns with the Department for Education’s acknowledgement of the negative impact mobile phones can have on students’ mental health, focus, and overall wellbeing during the school day. A recent study by the University of Cambridge showed that 48% of British teenagers feel addicted to social media. We remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting students—and their families—to combat this.

The use of HuSH phone pouches will support this by:

- Providing students with extended, uninterrupted time free from distractions, notifications, and social media, enabling them to develop essential social skills.
- Supporting students to better focus throughout the school day.
- Enhancing our current ethos and safeguarding systems, supporting students to meet expectations.

Working together with our families, we are creating a school community where everyone can engage and take pride in their learning.

Overleaf is a list of frequently asked questions. This is not an exhaustive list, and if you would like to ask anything further, please contact us via office@abbey.college

About the pouches

How do the pouches work?

A HuSH pouch is a lockable protective pouch that mobile phones and other smart devices can be placed into. Each student will be given a HuSH pouch to use each day at school. It blocks the signal to devices placed inside.

Who pays for the pouches?

We have invested in HuSH pouches for all students in Years 7 to 9 and New Horizons, as part of our commitment to creating a focused learning environment. To ensure a consistent experience for all students, we are loaning the pouches at no cost. If a pouch is damaged or lost, families will be charged a replacement fee of £15 to ensure all students can continue benefitting from the initiative.

Please note, if you wish to support student wellbeing by donating money for pouches, we are happy to accept contributions.

Is it the school's responsibility if devices are damaged within the pouch?

No. The pouches are padded and large enough to fit all phones. Students remain responsible for their devices, as the pouches are designed to provide protection during normal school activities.

Will the students use the same pouch throughout their time at Abbey College?

Yes. The pouches are designed to be durable and will last for the duration of their time here.

How do the pouches lock?

The pouch features a secure locking pin at the top. Students will push it into the locked position before arriving on site each morning.

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

In HuSH's experience, this rarely happens, as all students funnel past the unlocking stations at the exit. If they do arrive home with a phone in a pouch, they can either return to school to unlock it (if the site is still open) or enjoy a phone-free evening!

What if devices are accidentally locked in the pouch outside school hours (e.g. holidays or weekends)?

In such cases, at weekends, the pouch can only be unlocked when the student returns to school as school staff will not be on site.

During school holidays, staff members on site during the weekdays will be able to assist if a student has accidentally locked their phone in their pouch.

Can the pouch be used at home?

While it is possible, the pouch cannot be unlocked until the student returns to school.

The pouches can be locked if parents want to provide phone free time at home, but please remember that the student won't be able to unlock the pouch until they leave the school site to go home, *unlockers* will not be available in the morning.

Can the pouches be personalised?

No, the pouches are school property and are part of the equipment provided for students.

What should be placed in the pouch?

Mobile phones must be secured in the pouch.

How bulky are the pouches?

The pouches are lightweight, compact, and durable, made from slightly padded material. They fit easily into bags.

Do the pouches have a tracking device?

No, they are not equipped with tracking features.

What happens if the pouch gets wet?

Accidental spills are not an issue, as the pouch is water-repellent. However, it is not entirely waterproof, so care should still be taken.

Start of the School Day Routine

What is expected as students arrive?

Before going through the green gate at the Bus Turnaround, students should place their phone into their pouch and lock it. They should then place the pouch into their bag. There will be signs to remind students of this routine.

During morning line-ups, students will be asked to get their pouches out of their bags and show that they are locked. They will then return them to their bags for the remainder of the school day.

What if students are late to school?

Students arriving late will be expected to lock their phone pouch before going through the green gate and will follow the necessary process with the member of staff on duty.

What if a parent or carer needs to contact their child urgently?

This process remains the same. Parents should contact Reception by calling: 01487 812352.

Unlocking the HuSH Pouches

What will happen at the end of the school day?

Students will walk to the Bus Turnaround. There, they can take their pouch out of their bag and unlock it using the nearest unlocking station. Multiple unlockers are available for each bus and for students who are walking.

What if a student needs to unlock their pouch for an appointment (e.g. dentist visit) during the day?

Unlocking stations are available at Reception for such instances.

What if students forget to unlock their devices before leaving school?

Staff will remind students to unlock their devices before exiting. Students will also pass by multiple unlockers before leaving the site.

How will queues be managed at unlocking stations?

Multiple unlocking stations will be located at the Bus Turnaround. Staff will be on hand to manage queues.

Can students unlock their devices during the school day in case of an emergency?

This process remains the same. Students needing to contact home must do so through Student Support.

Will students needing to catch the bus get priority?

Adequate unlocking stations will ensure all students, including those catching buses, leave on time.

What happens if a student uses a taxi?

Duty staff will have a list of these students and will provide a mobile unlocker for use before they enter their taxis.

What happens if students have a sports fixture and must leave early?

The member of staff accompanying the trip will give students access to a mobile unlocker.

Consequences

What are the consequences if students do not use the pouches correctly?

During the pilot phase, the consequence will remain the same as previously: the phone will be confiscated, a sanction will be issued, and the student will collect their phone at the end of the day.

What happens if a student misuses or refuses to use the pouch?

Such behaviour will be treated as defiance. The school will follow the Behaviour Policy accordingly.

What happens if a student brings a device but forgets their pouch?

The student will need to hand their device to Student Support upon arrival and collect it from the main office at the end of the day. A corrective consequence will be applied to encourage responsibility. Persistent issues will result in escalated measures, applied fairly and consistently.

What if staff suspect a student has a device not secured in their locked pouch?

If staff reasonably suspect a student is carrying a device outside of the pouch, a search will be conducted in accordance with legislation. If a device is found, consequences will be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy. These measures are essential for maintaining a fair and respectful environment.

What if a phone goes off audibly during the school day while in the pouch?

The teacher will press the Alert button for Student Support to attend. Persistent issues will result in a sanction.

What happens if a student's pouch is taken by another student?

Lost or stolen pouches should be reported. Consequences will be applied in accordance with our Behaviour Policy for those found responsible for theft.

Other Questions

Will students use these if they are diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes?

No, these devices aren't suitable for students with this disease. HuSH does offer pouches which are not signal blocking if required.

Will students be able to access laptops or computers to support learning?

Yes. Students will continue to have access to school laptops and computers. We recognise the importance of technology as a powerful educational tool when used responsibly.

How will students be supported to tell the time?

Students are encouraged to wear analogue or basic digital watches to manage their time effectively. Additionally, more clocks have been installed around the school site so that students can see the time during breaks and lunchtimes.

How will students access their digital wallet?

Students can access their digital wallet before and after school. As we are a cashless site, they will not need to access this during school hours.