



Malbank School & Sixth Form College

Rejoice in being the best that we can be.

One week in - Phone Pouch Reflections

11.9.26

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of the first week of our phone pouch rollout, I wanted to take a moment to thank students, staff, and parents for the way this significant change has been approached.

Introducing a new system to 1,113 students was always going to require a period of adjustment. What has impressed us most has been the maturity, patience and good humour shown by the overwhelming majority of our students throughout the week.

As students have become more familiar with the process and staff have refined our approach, entry to school has become quicker and smoother each day. The same has been true at the end of the day, where students are becoming increasingly confident in using the unlocking stations. We have 11 unlocking points across the site and, as students become more familiar with all available locations, we expect the process to become even faster in the weeks ahead. Yesterday was really good and we expect everyone to want to be even faster on a Friday!

We have also been genuinely heartened to see that a number of students have made the decision to go completely phone-free and simply not bring a mobile phone to school at all. This has been particularly popular amongst our Year 7 students. We absolutely love this approach. Choosing not to bring a phone at all removes any temptation and demonstrates real maturity.

That said, it is important that we can verify when students tell us they are not carrying a phone. Naturally, the way we approach checks will develop over time. Students who make this choice every day and whose conduct has consistently demonstrated trustworthiness will be treated differently to students who have a history of poor behaviour and mobile phone misuse. We believe that is both fair and reasonable. Please rest assured that checks are courteous and not in the slightest bit threatening – most of my time doing them this week was spent sharing my envy about the lovely lunches I saw in bags and my amazement at how one young man confessed to eating five Pepperami sausages every day at break. It has been a learning experience for us all.

In a school of our considerable size, we have confiscated just 20 phones during the first week. 15 of these were due to students forgetting their pouch, while 5 were the result of breaches of the policy involving damage to or vandalism of a pouch. Frankly, I think that is a brilliant start and reflects extremely well on our students and our wider school community. Interestingly this has got better and better as the week has gone on and today at the point of sending this letter...we have had no forgotten pouch confiscations whatsoever – well done team!

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I would also like to thank the many parents who have been really supportive when receiving the disappointing news that their child had forgotten a pouch or received a sanction. It was genuinely encouraging to hear so many parents reinforce the message that young people learn through consequences and that they support the school's efforts to establish a positive culture around mobile phone use.

For the very small number of parents who have disagreed with the stance we have taken, I would respectfully remind everyone that this has been a lengthy and carefully consulted process. The policy was shared and clarified before the summer break and was communicated again prior to launch. There should be no surprises regarding either the expectations or the sanctions.

Please do not assume that arriving at school and demanding the return of a confiscated phone will alter our approach. It will not. The phone will remain in school for the duration of the confiscation period, exactly as set out in the policy. Those arrangements are supported by both Department for Education guidance and the school's legal powers to search for and confiscate prohibited items, details of which were included within the documentation shared with families. It is also important to remember that the push for "Phone Free Cheshire Schools" was launched and part-funded by the Cheshire Police Crime Commissioner himself, so it has wide support from the institutions that matter.



A reminder that parents can purchase replacement or back up pouches using the following link <https://store.schoolphonepouch.co.uk/cornovii> or QR code to the left. This transaction is direct between you and the company (the school is not involved and does not make any money from the transaction!) The cost of a replacement pouch is £8.75 + £1.99 postage and packaging, with delivery made to the pupil's home address.

I will finish with the **genuine** words of a few of our staff and students who have stopped to speak to me at some point this week about the pouches. All of these real examples perfectly summarise what the impact of this policy is about and why I am really happy with how it has gone to date.

Year 11 female student: "I didn't realise how much I looked at it until I couldn't. Now, a few days later, I've forgotten I used to look at it. Why didn't we do this years ago?"

Year 11 male student: "I thought I was going to hate it but I think this is really good sir, it was really hard to ignore notifications when you could feel them buzzing in your pocket but now I just don't think about it."

Y10 Male student: "It is good that I don't have to reply to all messages - I've now got an excuse now!"

Year 7 student: "I locked mine in my pouch before I went to bed so that I wasn't distracted - I'm going to do that every night"

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Member of SLT "I have done a quick comparison of toilet use comparing week one last year and this year and there is a very noticeable drop in how many children are going to the toilet in lessons."

Thank you once again for your support. Week one has been a tremendous success, and we look forward to building on that over the coming weeks.

Yours,

John Harrison
Headteacher - Malbank School and Sixth Form College