



Malbank School & Sixth Form College

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Phone Pouch – Response to queries

9th July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we move closer to the introduction of our mobile phone pouch system in September, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for the continued engagement, discussion and feedback that you have provided throughout this process.

Many parents have clearly taken the time to discuss the policy and sanctions with their children at home, and I genuinely appreciate this. Those conversations have led to some excellent discussions with students in school. Over recent weeks, a number of young people have approached me directly to ask questions and even trial the pouches themselves. The quality and maturity of many of those conversations has been fantastic so a big thankyou from me if discussions at home played a part in that.

During the final week, students will also begin to see the unlocking stations being installed around the school site. This is an important step as it will help everyone begin to visualise how the system will operate when it goes live from the Monday of the first full week back in September.

I would also like to reassure parents that we will not simply expect students to know how the system works overnight. During our return-to-school assemblies, we will carefully talk students through the process and explain exactly what is expected. We are also producing a number of short video guides which will quite literally walk students through the entry and exit process. In reality, the system is extremely straightforward, and we are confident that students will become familiar with it very quickly.

Thank you once again for the feedback we have received since this initiative was first launched for consultation way back in February. More than 600 parents took the time to respond to that formal consultation, making this one of the largest and most comprehensive exercises the school has ever undertaken. One of the clearest messages to emerge was the significant level of parental concern regarding the impact that mobile phones and screen time are having on young people.

Interestingly, the consultation also highlighted a notable difference between parental perceptions and what students told us. Put simply, many parents believed their children spent significantly less time on their phones than the students themselves reported. For me, that finding was particularly powerful and reinforced the importance of schools and families working together to help young people develop healthy habits around technology use.

Since my letter home last week and the sharing of the policy and sanctions, I have only had 5 parents contact me - but they did all share a broadly similar concern. Their question was: *Why should the phone be confiscated if my child **forgets** their pouch?*

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I want to be very clear about this because it is an important part of how the system will operate at Malbank.

Whilst I appreciate that not all schools run their systems in the same way, at Malbank if a student brings a phone to school but does not have their pouch, the phone will be confiscated and returned in line with our published policy, including overnight confiscation.

The reason for this approach is straightforward. The success of the system depends upon students taking responsibility for managing their pouch. Our students remember their uniforms – if they don't, there is a sanction. They remember essential equipment – if they don't, there is a sanction. Most importantly, the overwhelming majority *never* forget their phone. I therefore do not believe it is unreasonable to expect students to remember their pouch as well.

If we simply collected phones and returned them at the end of the day whenever a pouch was forgotten, we would effectively be removing students' responsibility and transferring it to school staff. The school would end up operating a giant "pouch service" for students who chose not to engage with the system properly. In practice, it would become very easy for students to stop bringing their pouch altogether and simply expect the school to solve the problem on their behalf.

That is not the lesson we should be teaching our young people. An important aspect of education is helping students develop organisation, accountability and an understanding that actions sometimes have consequences. These are qualities that will serve our students well throughout their lives.

That said, I fully recognise that some parents have genuine concerns about children who may find organisation particularly challenging, particularly those with identified special educational needs. To support families in these circumstances, I would like to offer a practical solution.



As part of the September roll out - parents can purchase replacement pouches using the following link <https://store.schoolphonepouch.co.uk/cornovii> or QR code if a pouch is permanently lost or damaged meaning a replacement is needed. This transaction is direct between you and the company and the cost of a replacement pouch will be £8.75 plus £1.99 postage and packaging, with delivery made directly to the pupil's home address.

Therefore, in answer to the concern raised - **if a parent has a genuine concern that their child may regularly forget their pouch, particularly if this is due to an identified special need, they are welcome to purchase a second pouch.** This can be clearly labelled with the student's name, brought to school and stored securely in the relevant Key Stage office.

Should the student forget their primary pouch, they would then have a backup pouch available and would not receive the sanction. They would, however, need to return the spare pouch to

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the office at the end of the day, otherwise there is a risk that both pouches end up at home and the safety net disappears.

There is also a second alternative. *If* a student forgets their pouch, a parent or carer may bring it into school during the day before the start of lunchtime. In those circumstances, once the pouch arrives and the phone is secured appropriately, it would be entirely reasonable for the student to have their phone returned and continue their day as normal. Please note that if the pouch is brought in after the start of lunch – the overnight confiscation sanction would still stand.

Before taking option one (or in the case of the 2nd option – considering what you may do if it happens), I would encourage parents to consider carefully whether it is the right decision. One of the key purposes of school is to help children develop resilience, responsibility and independence. In my view, our students are entirely capable of remembering a pouch each day, just as they can remember a tie or a blazer. By providing them with a fall-back option, are we helping to build that responsibility long term or providing them with a quick fix that doesn't help build a very important habit? I am happy to state that I would want to use the system we will operate as a mechanism to *support* my own son (who is also occasionally forgetful) to take responsibility for his decisions and organisation. If he were to forget his pouch, I would want him to learn a lesson from it and not do it again. However, I am happy to leave this with families to debate and decide themselves.

Finally, I would like to remind parents about our drop-in session next Wednesday. As this is the same night as the England game, we have had to move our pre-planned Sports Awards Evening forward to take place from 5.30-6.30pm. To avoid a clash with this large-scale event please note the pouch drop-in session will now take place between **4.00pm and 5.00pm in the Main Hall**.

Please note that this is not a consultation event. The decision to introduce phone pouches has been made and the system will be implemented in September. The purpose of the session is simply to provide an opportunity for families to see the pouches, view the infrastructure required to unlock them and ask any practical questions they may have before launch.

Thank you again for your continued support. While I recognise that not everyone will agree with every aspect of the policy, I remain firmly convinced that this initiative will have a significant positive impact on focus, learning, social interaction and wellbeing across the school. I look forward to working with students and families to ensure its successful introduction in September.

Yours,

John Harrison
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