

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may be aware that national expectations around mobile phone use in schools have been strengthened. The Department for Education is clear that schools should be “mobile phone-free environments by default.” All schools are now expected to follow this unless there is a strong reason not to.

In practice, this means students should not have access to and be able to use phones at any point during the school day, including lessons, transitions, and social times, except in specific cases such as medical need (e.g. diabetes monitoring).

At Thamesmead, we currently ask students to keep phones switched off and out of sight. While this has helped, it does not fully prevent use during the school day. We have clear evidence that some students still access phones during lessons and social times, which can disrupt learning and wellbeing.

There is also increasing evidence that the presence of a mobile phone—even when not in use—can reduce attention, concentration, and engagement. Phones and apps are designed to draw attention, making it harder for young people to focus on learning.

Our priority is to provide a safe, calm, and focused environment where all students can thrive. It has become increasingly harder for us to provide this as technology has changed, and smartphones are now widely available. Given the stronger national expectations, alongside this growing evidence, we believe now is the right time to update our approach and move towards a fully phone-free school day. We believe that this will be better for students as it will remove the ever-present distraction that phones create and allow them to enjoy school without worrying about what is happening online or on their phone. Research shows that schools who have implemented such policies have seen an improvement in focus and student behaviour.

We want to reassure you that students will always be able to contact home via the school office if needed, and families can contact students in the same way.

We have looked carefully at systems used successfully in other local schools and identified three approaches that are most effective:

- Lockable phone pouches
- Lockable phone trays
- A ban on smartphones in school

We will introduce a revised policy from September that aligns with national expectations. Before finalising this, we would very much value your views on the possible methods available to us.

Please complete the short survey linked below. We will consider parent and student feedback carefully before confirming our approach next half term.

Complete the survey here. [Mobile phones at Thamesmead – Fill in form](#)

Thank you for your support in helping us create the best possible learning environment for all students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Reeves', is centered below the closing text.

Phil Reeves

Headteacher

Mobile Phone Policy Options

1. Lockable Phone Pouches

Students bring their phone to school, switch it off, and place it in a personal lockable pouch at the start of the day. The pouch remains with the student but cannot be opened until the end of the day using unlocking stations. These are also used by venues such as the O2 to restrict phone access during big shows.

Positives:

- Students retain responsibility for their phone
- Reduces anxiety about separation from phones
- Easy to monitor and enforce, quick to lock and unlock
- Suitable for school trips

Drawbacks:

- Cost of approximately £10–£20 per student
- Lost or damaged pouches may need replacing

Used successfully in: Sunbury Manor, Heathside Walton, Thomas Knyvett College

2. Lockable Phone Trays

Students hand in phones at the start of the day or during tutor time. Phones are stored securely in locked trays or cabinets and returned at the end of the day.

Positives:

- Phones fully removed during the school day
- No cost to families

Drawbacks:

- Some students may initially find this challenging
- Time needed at start and end of day
- Small risk of mix-ups or damage
- Late arrivals require additional processes

Used successfully in: Cobham Free School

3. Ban on Smartphones in School

Students are not allowed to bring smartphones into school. They may bring a basic non-smartphone to allow communication before and after school.

Positives:

- Reduces pressure to own a smartphone
- Supports families delaying smartphone use
- Reduces exposure to social media risks

Drawbacks:

- Limits access to app-based services such as travel
- Basic phones may still cause some distraction

Used successfully in: Salesians Chertsey, St Peter's Guildford

Summary of Evidence

Evidence from schools using these approaches shows improved attention, behaviour and engagement in lessons, particularly with pouch and tray systems.

Approaches Not Feasible at Thamesmead

- Use of lockers – insufficient capacity for all students
- Phones kept in bags – not all students bring bags
- Phones switched off in pockets – current system is not fully effective