

18<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Parent/carers,

I wanted to take the time to write to you to remind you that The Hastings Academy is committed to being a phone-free space. Since becoming a phone free space, we have seen learning and social behaviour improve as students are fully engaged with their teachers and classmates. We believe that continuing to be a phone free school next academic year is right for our school community.

Whilst we acknowledge that phones have great utility, research shows that the average screen time for a secondary school age child has increased by 30% since 2015 to a staggering 4hrs and 19 minutes per day. In addition to this concerning figure, schools nationally are facing increasing incidents of cyber bullying as well as unwanted videoing and photographing of students and staff on school sites. We are also aware that new government safeguarding guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' comes into force in September. This new guidance emphasises our responsibility to control all online content students access on our school site. As we are unable to monitor or control what students are able to access from their personal phones, this further supports our choice to remain a phone free space.

You may know that the Academy subscribes to a scheme called 'Yondr' which provides pouches for students to seal their phones in on entry to the building. Yondr has been implemented in over 1,500 schools across 23 countries to facilitate an engaged learning environment. As an Academy, we have used Yondr for last 2 years and Yondr has made a positive impact here.

The Yondr Program utilises a simple, secure pouch that stores a phone. Every student should secure their phone in a personally assigned Yondr pouch when they arrive at school. Students will maintain possession of their phones and will not use them until their pouches are opened at the end of the school day as they leave the site. Students are required to bring their Yondr pouch to and from school each day and are responsible for their pouch at all times.

Yondr recently surveyed over 900 school partners to measure the effects of creating phone-free educational environments. These schools achieved notable progress in multiple areas:

- 65% of schools saw an improvement in academic performance
- 74% of schools saw an improvement in student behavior
- 83% of schools saw an improvement in student engagement in the classroom

To support us to remain phone free, from September, your child will need to show that they have their phone in their Yondr pouch during their registration period. Our search and screening guidance for prohibited items in our behaviour policy may be applied for any child who does not have a pouch to ensure that they do not have a phone on their person. Please rest assured that we are happy to keep any students phones in the school safe if this is a preference over sealing the phone in their Yondr Pouch.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the pastoral team.

In an effort to best serve your child, we appreciate your support to help us remain a phone free school.

Yours sincerely



Cordelia MacMillan  
Vice Principal