



June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the past few months, all schools across our Trust have been reviewing our approach to phones and social media in light of growing national concern, emerging research and conversations with families. All schools recently asked parents to complete a survey about smartphones and social media. The response was significant, with many families sharing their views. The results showed an overwhelming level of concern and a clear desire for schools and parents to work together to support children in navigating an increasingly complex digital world.

In each of our schools, the survey found that:

- The vast majority of parents agreed that smartphones and social media pose a safeguarding risk.
- The vast majority agreed that life was simpler for children before smartphones and social media.
- Almost all said they would feel supported if more parents agreed to delay giving smartphones to children until a set age.
- The vast majority said they would feel supported if the school took a stronger stance.
- The most common concerns raised were online bullying, inappropriate content, predatory behaviour from adults, mental health concerns and the impact on children's attention and sleep.
- Again, an incredibly high percentage of people felt a child should not own a smartphone before Year 6, with the majority believing children should wait until at least age 13 and many favouring age 16.

As a result of the survey findings and pilot work that has been undertaken, we will be using a new Phone Policy, with clearer expectations around mobile phones from September 2026. The full policy will be sent out with this letter and can also be found by [clicking the link here](#). It will become effective in September and be reviewed at the end of the first year. We value your thoughts during this period as we look to refine our approach. We very much want to work with you in the first year to support making this happen. In summary:

- All our schools will remain mobile-phone-free environments by default.
- Children in Nursery to Year 4 should not bring any type of phone to school.
- For children in Years 5 and 6 who walk to and from school independently, parents may choose to provide a simple non-smartphone device for communication purposes. Smartphones, smartwatches and glasses, and any device capable of accessing the internet will not be permitted on-site, except for verified medical purposes. The [attached policy](#) provides some guidance about suitable devices.
- Any permitted phone must be switched off and handed to the office or other staff at the start of the day.
- Parents wishing to track their children on the way to and from school, can consider non-smartphones with tracking capability, or other tracking devices but these must also be handed in at the start of the school day. Tracking devices are not permitted on educational visits.
- Phones that are outside of this remit, found with a child, or in a bag, will be removed and returned in line with the policy.

We recognise that technology plays an important role in modern life and our curriculum continues to teach children how to use digital tools safely and responsibly. However, we also recognise that children need time to develop socially, emotionally and academically before being exposed to many of the challenges that smartphones and social media can present.

We know that families will hold a range of views and, ultimately, decisions about smartphone ownership remain a matter for parents. However, the survey results show that many families feel reassured when expectations are

shared collectively. By taking this approach, we hope to reduce pressure on parents, support children's wellbeing and create a culture where childhood can be enjoyed.

You may like to read more at <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>.

If you have questions, or would like to comment, please reach out and speak to us. Thank you, as always, for your support.

Best wishes,

Dan Oakes
Headteacher
St. Bartholomew's Primary
Academy

Louise Scrivens
Headteacher
Marden Vale

Emily Mullord
Executive Headteacher of
Southbroom St. James & The
Trinity

51%

of UK 11-13 year-olds have seen hardcore pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

75%

of UK 15 year olds questioned had been sent beheading videos

Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

90%

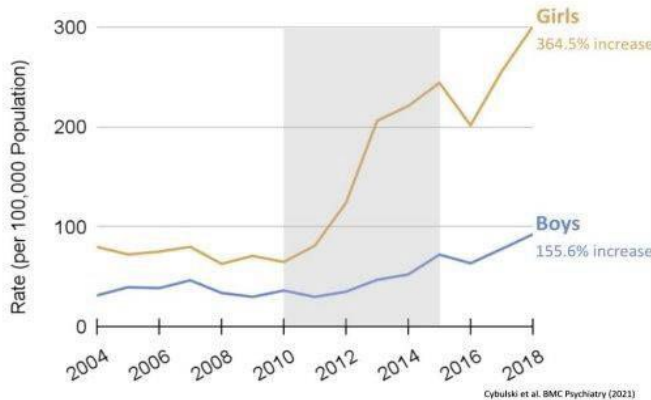
of girls and 50% of boys say they are sent unwanted explicit content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021



SMARTPHONES ARE FUELLING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

UK Teens, Self-harm Episodes (Ages 10 – 12)



3x

Teens with problematic smartphone-use are three times as likely to have depression

King's College London, 2024



SMARTPHONES AFFECT ALL ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE



ATTENTION

Bedtime use of smartphones doubles children's risk of poor sleep, hindering their learning



BULLYING

84% of bullying now takes place on a device, spilling into the school day



ROAD SAFETY

Mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents involving children



FIGHTS

Teachers tell us fights escalate more because students are filming them



SOCIALISING

Smartphones reduce face to face socialising at break and lunchtimes



CRIME

500 children a day were mugged in 2020 in the UK, almost all for smartphones