

Dear Parents/Carers,

**RE: A United Commitment to Childhood: The 'Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3' Initiative**

***From January Woodmancote will be a smartphone free school.  
Children will be unable to bring smartphones on to the school grounds.***

### **The Parent / Carer Survey**

The survey in June received really strong engagement from the parent / carer community – thank you. In total, 135 families engaged and offered their reflections. Families from Reception to Year 6 all took part. Overall, the consensus was significantly in favour of Woodmancote becoming a smartphone-free school with the split sitting at 91%:9%.

Our huge thanks to everyone who took time to share their thoughts and opinions on this matter. Reflecting on all we have learned during the survey; we have concluded that we support the notion of Woodmancote becoming a smartphone free school for children. It is now our intention to revisit the Woodmancote Online Safety and Mobile Phone policy to make the necessary changes and for this to be ready for implementation from January 2026, at which point measures will be in place to see a ban on children bringing smartphones to school.

### **Context**

We are writing to you today as one of many Cheltenham primary and secondary schools who share a deep concern about the growing negative impact of smartphones and the passive use of digital technology on childhood. With government guidance currently stating that it is for individual school leaders to develop a tailored policy on the use of mobile phones, together, we are committing to join the initiative: 'Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3', with the shared aim of supporting families and communities to delay the introduction of personal smartphones and smart devices at home until at least Year 10 (age 14-15).

### **Why This Matters**

In recent years, we have seen a significant shift in childhood experiences. Children as young as 8 are now regularly using their own smartphones, often with unrestricted access to the internet and social media. While technology has its place, it is becoming increasingly clear that the early and unsupervised use of smart devices is causing:

- Rising levels of anxiety, sleep disruption, and reduced attention spans
- Exposure to inappropriate content and online risks
- A decline in face-to-face social interaction and imaginative play
- Increased pressure to grow up too quickly
- Child brain chemistry altered to the point of appearing similar to ADHD/ASD and children being wrongly referred for assessment
- Higher rates of self-harm and suicide in children, contributing to suicide being the biggest killer of under-35s in the UK today



Parents may find these links of interest in better understanding the context in which we are working.

[Papaya](#) – ‘Helping families thrive in the digital age’ and [Dr Paul Redford and Dr Ben Knight from UWE Bristol](#). Dr Jonathan Haidt and his book [The Anxious Generation](#).

As educators and caregivers, we are managing an unprecedented level of safeguarding and behaviour issues linked to the use of smart devices outside of school and believe that childhood should be protected, playful, and developmentally appropriate. We want to give our children the space to grow, explore, and connect with the world around them without the pressures and distractions of the digital world too soon.

Through the ‘Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3’ initiative, we are:

- Encouraging families to delay smartphone ownership until at least Year 10
- Promoting play-based, active, and creative childhoods
- Creating a united front across schools so that no child feels left out or different for not having a smartphone
- Providing support and resources to help families navigate this journey together

This is not about judging parenting choices or banning appropriate use of technology altogether, for example we all acknowledge the positive role technology can play in supporting some children to be able to access education and the wider world. It is about reclaiming childhood and making a positive, community-wide shift that puts children’s wellbeing first.

We intend to achieve this shared intent in a number of ways:

- We are setting out on a journey to become smartphone-free entirely in the new calendar year (January 2026);
- We are committed to helping educate and support you, our parent and carer community, along this journey. We will be developing resources as part of a dedicated area on our website in the coming months.

We know that change is easier when we do it together. By uniting across schools, we hope to create a strong, supportive culture that empowers families to make informed, confident decisions. Thank you for standing with us in this important movement. Together, we can give our children the gift of a slower, safer, and more joyful childhood.

**January 2026** will therefore mark the start of our "**Smartphone Free at KS1,2 and 3**" campaign. It does exactly what it says on the tin. Working with other local schools we're encouraging families to hold off giving their children smartphones until they are older.

Of course, it's not for us to tell parents what they can or cannot do with their children - that's certainly not what we're trying to do! However, we know from countless conversations with parents that they'd like to be able to hold off giving their children phones but, because "everybody's doing it" it's really difficult to say, "No". So, we're hoping that by running this campaign, you'll know that if you choose to hold off giving your children a smartphone until they are older, you have our support.

*We hope that in making this announcement now, we have given sufficient notice to parents and carers, they may wish to explore GPS tags / non-smartphones for those occasions you feel a child needs to make contact/be contactable. We are conscious that some parents may be considering buying phones for their children at Christmas.*

Regards,  
G Tucker



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Will children not be allowed to bring any phones on site?**

The aim is to change the narrative around when children need access to a smartphone. If parents of children want their child to have a phone because they walk to and from school and this provides a degree of reassurance, we will be allowing non-smart phones (dumbphones)

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/smartphones-dumb-phones-guide/>

### **My child has diabetes and uses a smartphone as part of their care plan. Will these be allowed on site?**

If your child is diabetic and uses a smart phone to manage their condition, this will be included in their care plan and a phone will be permitted in this instance.

### **I am worried about my child walking to school, how can I support this?**

Smartphones have never been part of our learning approach. However, students have been permitted to bring them to school because many parents want to track their child's movements or maintain contact outside school hours.

As alternatives, parents may consider non-smartphones (basic phones) or GPS tracking devices.

<https://www.safewise.com/resources/wearable-gps-tracking-devices-for-kids-guide/>

### **What happens if my child has taken a phone in without my knowledge?**

Our initiative will launch in January 2026 and all children will have the opportunity to discuss this issue with their class teachers. Initially, any child found with a smartphone will simply have it confiscated and then returned to the parent. In time, if a child repeatedly disregards the school expectations, there will be consequences put in place, in line with an updated Relationship and Behaviour Policy.

### **Where can I go for advice about online safety, so that I can become more confident with technology?**

There are a range of resources that can be accessed by parents including

[Papaya](#)

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/resource/thinkuknow-advice-from-ceop>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

[https://swgfl.org.uk/assets/documents/online-safety-guide-for-parents.pdf?\\_id=1553269251](https://swgfl.org.uk/assets/documents/online-safety-guide-for-parents.pdf?_id=1553269251)

In the coming months we will be providing a range of resources for parents via a new tab on our website, regular updates via dojo and via our monthly newsletter. Please keep an eye out for these.