



WBIS & WBJS

Parents information evening

Online safety and Smartphone Awareness





E-safety is one of those grey areas that spans home and school. Online activity and mobile phone use at home might be seen as something that is nothing to do with school. However, the chats that are happening in the middle of the night DO affect school and do affect the conversations we have to have with children in school.

[NEWSLETTERS](#)[CALENDAR](#)[TERM DATES](#)[TRANSITION](#)[FORMS](#)[SCHOOL MEALS](#)[UNIFORM](#)[AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS](#)[ONLINE SAFETY](#)[SUPPORT IN MATHS](#)[SUPPORT IN ENGLISH](#)

[Online safety Y3 \(5 lessons\)](#)

Learning: the difference between fact, opinion and belief; and how to deal with upsetting online content. Knowing how to protect personal information online.

[Online safety Y4 \(5 lessons\)](#)

Searching for information and making a judgement about the probable accuracy; recognising adverts and pop-ups; understanding that technology can be distracting.

[Online safety Y5 \(5 lessons\)](#)

Learning about app permissions; the positive and negative aspects of online communication; that online information is not always factual; how to deal with online bullying and managing our health and wellbeing.

[Online safety Y6 \(6 lessons\)](#)

Learning to deal with issues online; about the impact and consequences of sharing information online; how to develop a positive online reputation; combating and dealing with online bullying and protective passwords.

There are lots of positives...



Online games can enhance teamwork and creativity



Add to the child's store of knowledge




Households with computers perform better academically



Improve both visual intelligence and hand-eye coordination

89% of 8-11 year olds said that using social media made them feel happy and **82%** said it helped them to feel closer to their friends

2020 Ofcom

	Content Child engages with or is exposed to potentially harmful content	Contact Child experiences or is targeted by potentially harmful <i>adult</i> contact	Conduct Child witnesses, participates in or is a victim of potentially harmful <i>peer</i> conduct	Contract Child is party to or exploited by potentially harmful contract
Aggressive	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful or extremist information and communication	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted or excessive surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile communication or peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, hacking, blackmail, security risks
Sexual	Pornography (harmful or illegal), sexualization of culture, oppressive body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, sextortion, the generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messaging, adverse sexual pressures	Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming (paid-for) child sexual abuse
Values	Mis/disinformation, age-inappropriate marketing or user-generated content	Ideological persuasion or manipulation, radicalisation and extremist recruitment	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, adverse peer pressures	Gambling, filter bubbles, micro-targeting, dark patterns shaping persuasion or purchase
Cross-cutting	Privacy violations (interpersonal, institutional, commercial) Physical and mental health risks (e.g., sedentary lifestyle, excessive screen use, isolation, anxiety) Inequalities and discrimination (in/exclusion, exploiting vulnerability, algorithmic bias/predictive analytics)			

The main takeaway we would like to communicate is that these are not 'distant' risks that take place in 'other' places. Apart from the Contract element, we have witnessed almost all of these within Year 6 Whatsapp groups in our school.

Each of these risks could be an evening of its own. However, by far **our** greatest challenge is in the way pupils interact and chat to each other on messaging apps. Despite endless e-safety lessons, the children in our school (who know how to behave on the playground and can give all the correct answers when asked about online conduct) get drawn into using foul, racist, homophobic, non-inclusive, nasty language online.



This all begins with phone ownership and children being given their own phone.

Evidence is now emerging which is beginning to challenge the norm of owning a phone at a young age; evidence that proves that while technology IS wonderful, the risks are real and should not be dismissed or ignored.

The link between social media and mental health in young people.

- **(US) The younger someone gets a mobile phone, the worse their mental health in later life**
<https://sapienlabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sapien-Labs-Age-of-First-Smartphone-and-Mental-Wellbeing-Outcomes.pdf>
- **(Switzerland) Excessive smartphone use is associated with psychiatric, cognitive, emotional, medical and brain changes in adolescents that should be considered by health and education professionals**
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140197121000853>
- **(UK) The Millennium Cohort Study states that ‘greater social media use relates to poor sleep, low self-esteem and poor body image’**
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31193561/>
- **(UK) In the last three years, the likelihood of a young person having a mental health issue has increased by 50% and emergency referrals to youth mental healthcare services have risen by 53%. This has been strongly correlated with smartphone use.**
<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics>

Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Mental Illness Among College Students

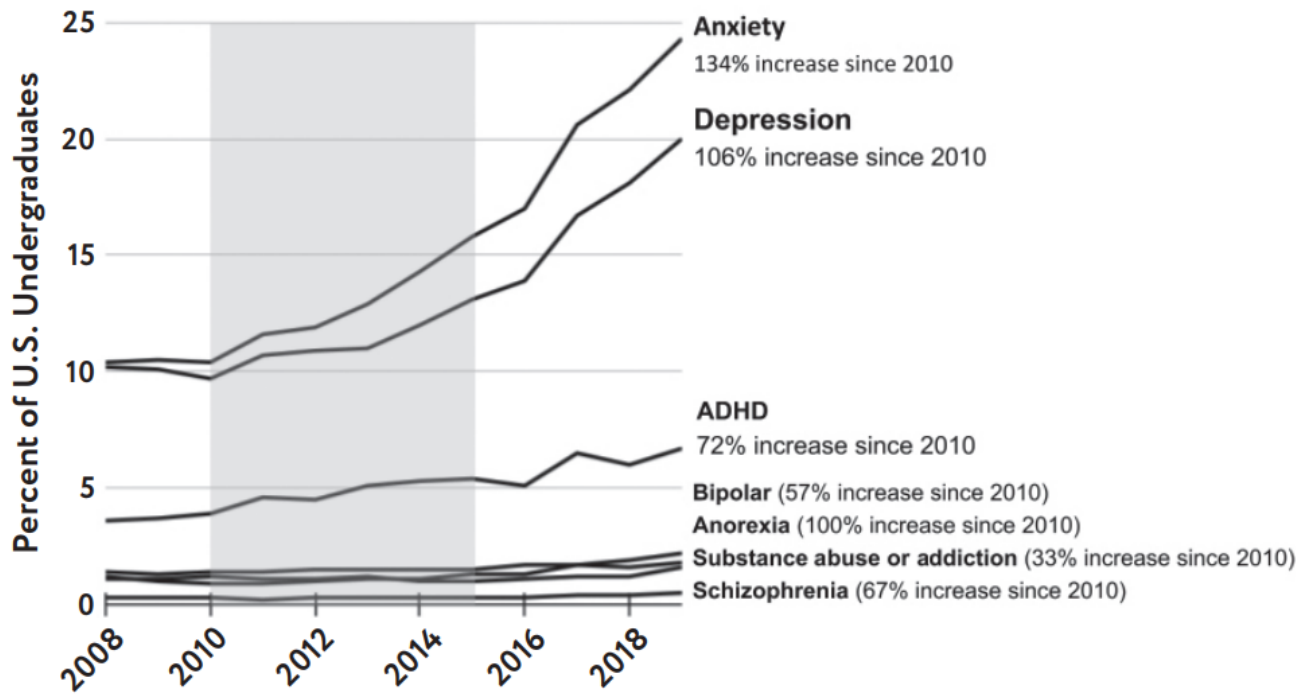


Figure 1.2. Percent of U.S. undergraduates with each of several mental illnesses. Rates of diagnosis of various mental illnesses increased in the 2010s among college students, especially for anxiety and depression. (Source: American College Health Association.)⁹

Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Anxiety Prevalence by Age

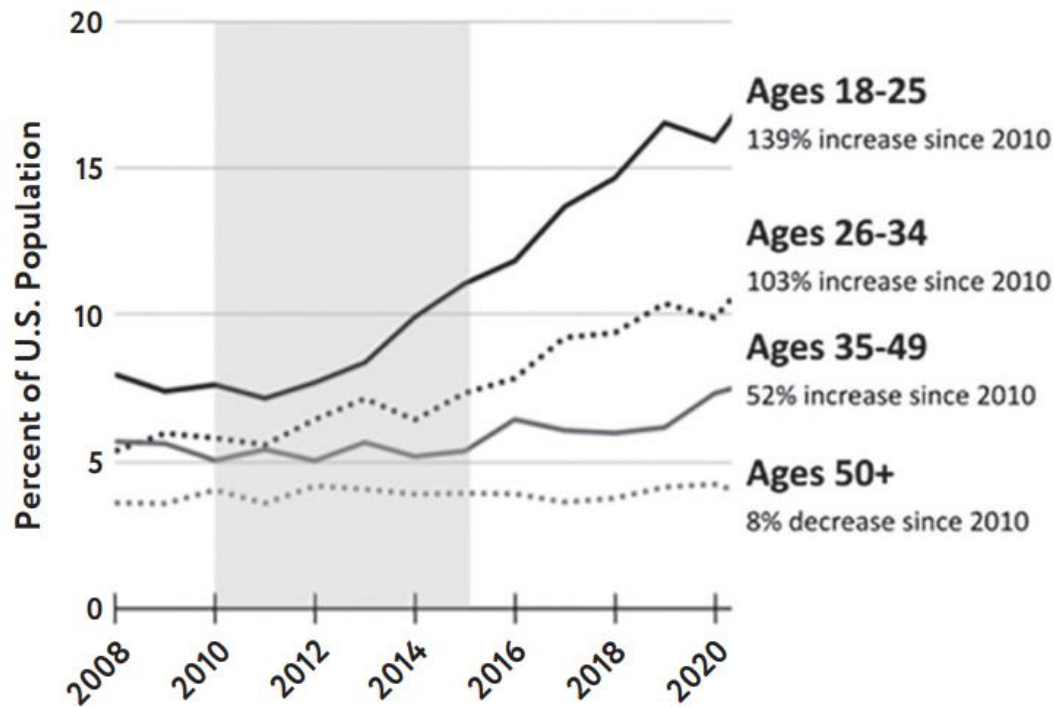


Figure 1.3. Percent of U.S. adults reporting high levels of anxiety by age group. (Source: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)¹¹

Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Self-Harm Episodes, U.K. Teens

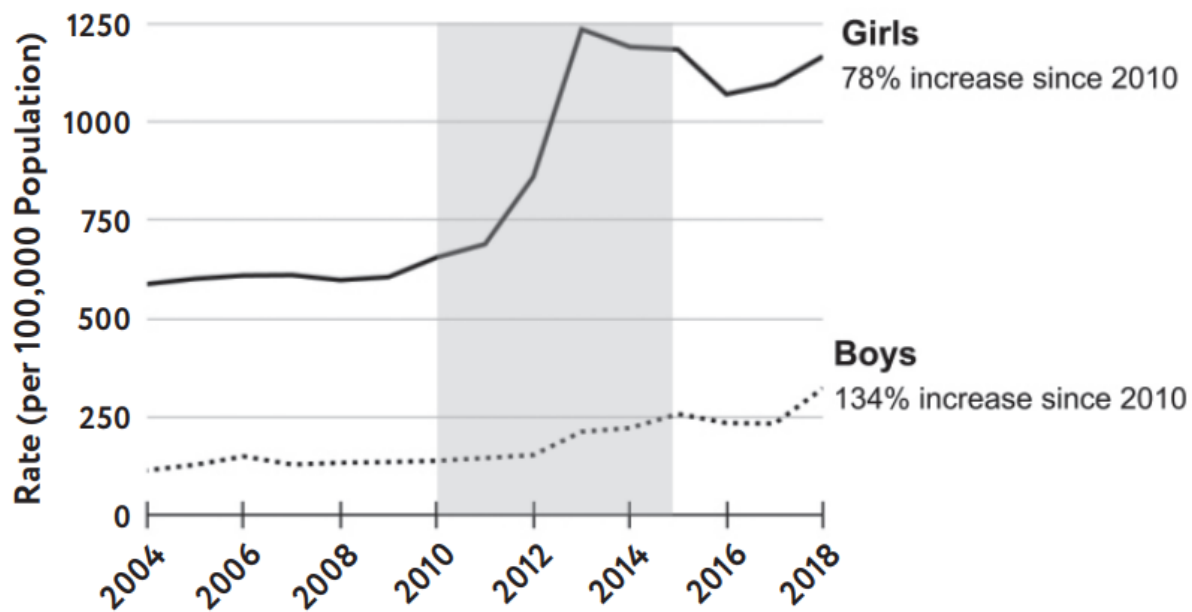


Figure 1.9. U.K. teens' (ages 13–16) self-harm episodes. (Source: Cybulski et al., 2021, drawing from two databases of anonymized British medical records.)⁵¹

Mental Health Hospitalizations, Australia

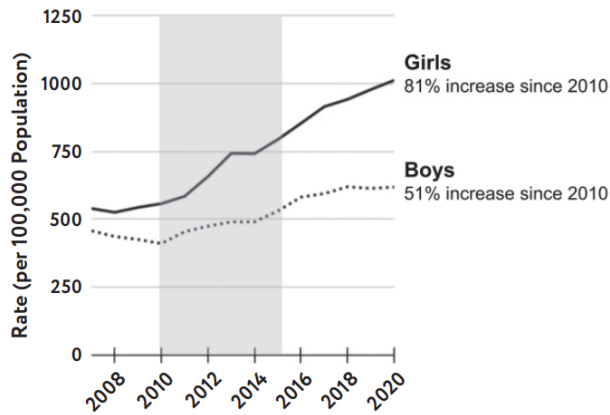


Figure 1.10. Rate at which Australian teens (ages 12–24) were kept in hospitals overnight for mental health reasons. (Source: Australia’s Health 2022 Data Insights).⁵³

High Psychological Distress, Nordic Nations

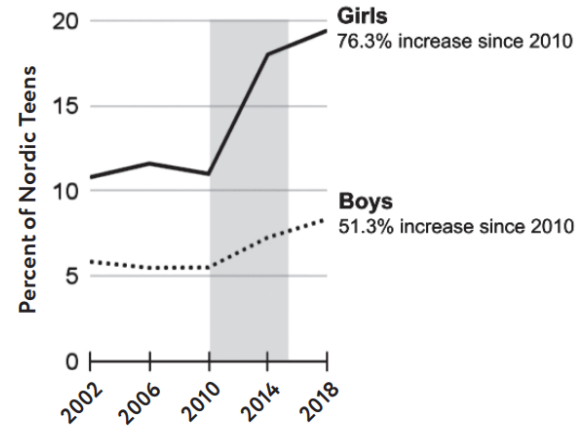


Figure 1.11. Percent of Nordic teens with high psychological distress (ages 11–15). (Source: Data from the Health Behavior in School Age Children Survey).⁵⁶

Excellent or Very Good Mental Health, Canadian Women

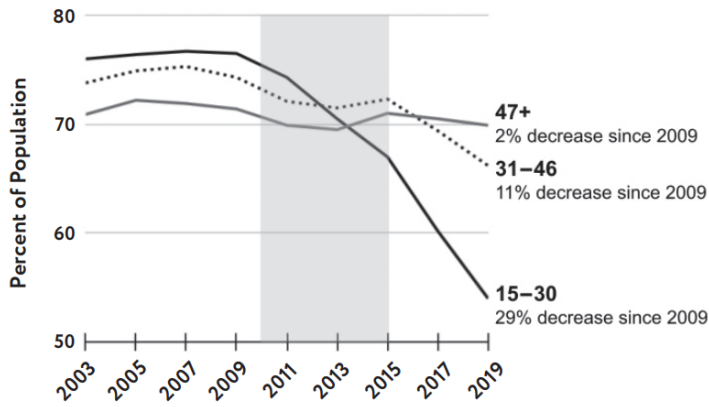


Figure 1.8. Percent of girls and women in Ontario, Canada, who reported that their mental health was either “excellent” or “very good.” (Source: D. Garriguet [2021], Portrait of youth in Canada: Data report.)⁴⁷

The grey period on these graphs where we see the greatest change was when smartphones and social media were introduced (see next graph).

Communication Technology Adoption

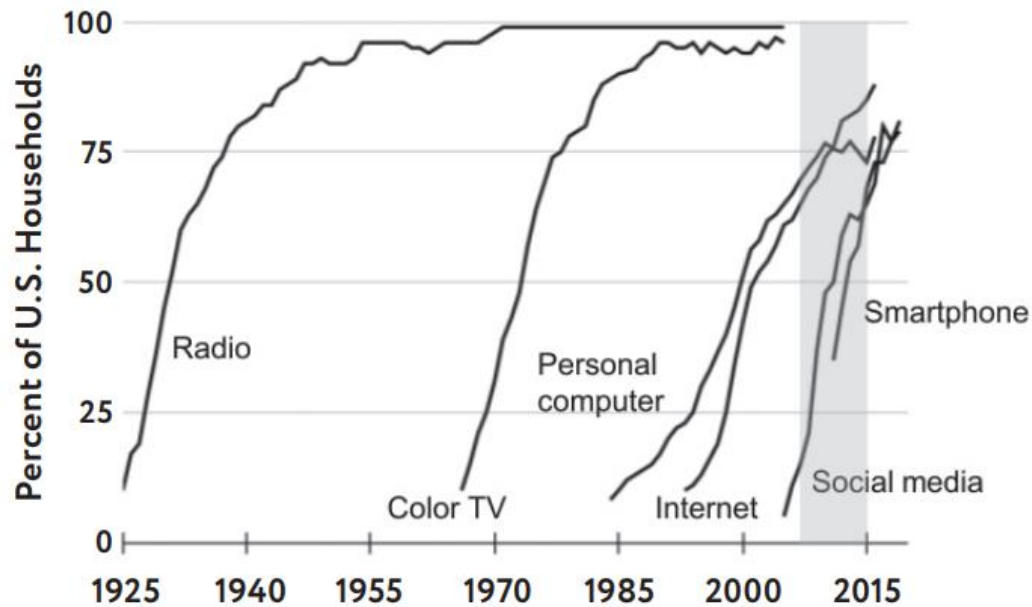


Figure 1.6. The share of U.S. households using specific technologies. The smartphone was adopted faster than any other communication technology in history. (Source: Our World in Data.)²⁵

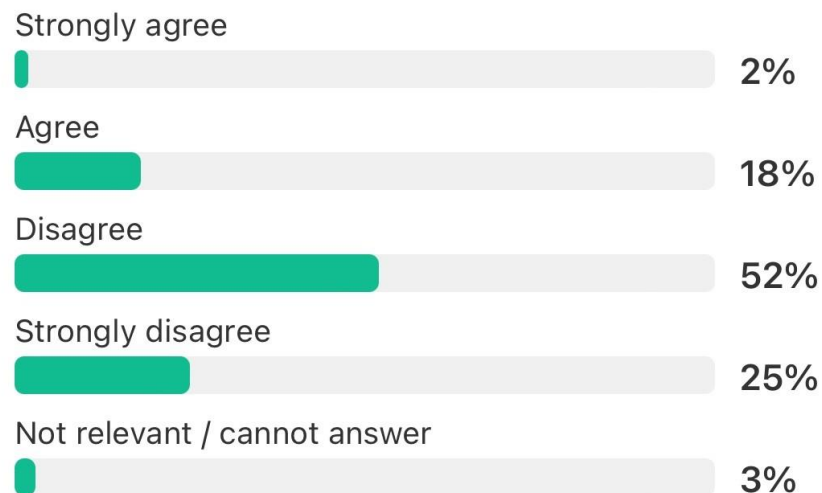
The grey area on the previous graphs represents the introduction of smart phones and access to social media.

Introducing young people to the overwhelming content associated with social media when the adolescent brain is still forming can be seen to have a seriously detrimental effect.

Backed up by teachers



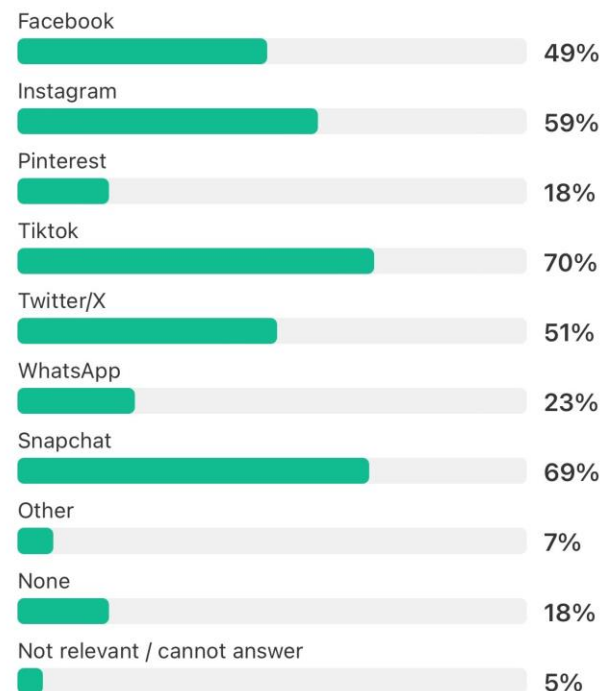
On balance, the benefits of allowing children aged 13-17 to use social media outweigh the downsides for them



11,583 responses on 27th May 2024



Would you like to see a ban on under 16 use of any of the following platforms?



11,632 responses on 28th May 2024

Backed up by others (parents, medical community)



June 22nd 2024



June 18th 2024



June 17th 2024

Dr Vivek Murthy is the most senior medic in America. This week he's recommended that social media comes with a warning label stating that it is **“associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents”**



Adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media **face double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms**, and the average daily use in this age group, as of the summer of 2023, was **4.8 hours**.

Jama Psychiatry, 2019/Gallup, 2023



As a father of a 6 and a 7-year old, he understands that the harms caused by these digital products **can't be solved through people just 'being better parents'**



“These harms are not a failure of willpower and parenting,” he wrote in the New York Times this week. **“They are the consequence of unleashing powerful technology without adequate safety measures, transparency or accountability.”**



“There is no seatbelt for parents to click, no helmet to snap in place, no assurance that trusted experts have investigated and ensured that these platforms are safe for our kids. **There are just parents and their children, trying to figure it out on their own, pitted against some of the best product engineers and most well-resourced companies in the world.**”



Backed up by young people themselves

In a survey of 2,000 13 to 18-year-olds, conducted by BBC Radio 5 Live and BBC Bitesize, young people were asked about various aspects of life - including mental health and their smartphone habits.

The findings of the survey, carried out by polling company Survation, suggest:

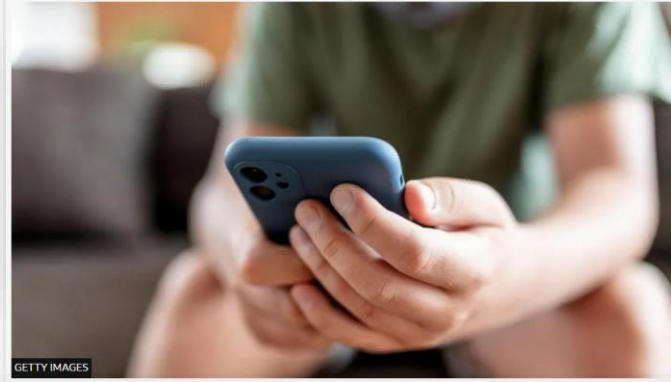
23% agree that smartphones should be banned for under-16s

35% think social media should be banned for under-16s





City headteachers suggest banning smartphones for U-14s



In a letter to parents, St Albans Primary Schools Consortium suggested that smartphones shouldn't be given to students until Year 9.

"We know that in our schools some children as young as Key Stage 1 have smartphones," the letter read.

The headteachers added that, while phones can be useful for parents to keep in contact while their children are away from home, phones "do not need to have access to the internet" to keep children safe.

"As head teachers, we have committed to promoting our own schools as smartphone-free."

The letter was signed by 20 of the 24 primary school headteachers in the city.

Research from Ofcom (the Office of Communications) - which oversees TV, radio and internet services in the UK - found that 91% of 11-year-olds own a smartphone in the UK.

This is a letter that was sent to parents of a school in London and is being mirrored by many schools around the country. Schools that are now urging parents to delay the purchasing of smartphones.

May 2024



Dear Parents

I am sure I have met many of you at various Alleyne's events over the past year, but I would like to take this opportunity to re-introduce myself.

I am the Deputy Head Pastoral and I oversee our pastoral provision, structures and systems. I work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and other members of staff with key pastoral roles) to coordinate the School's overarching approach to pastoral care, with the ultimate aim of steering our young people through any challenges ahead with age-appropriate information, education and advice. When crises occur - which sometimes they do - our pastoral team is there to support and guide both students and parents.

I hope your child is looking forward to joining Year 7 in September. There will, no doubt, be many things they are excited about and one of these may be an expectation that they will receive a shiny new mobile phone. The media is full of discussion around their use and the impact of the associated social media on our young people. At Alleyne's we are alert to these risks and do a great deal to educate our students on how to navigate many of the challenges that will come their way. That said, we do feel that the game is somewhat stacked against them and that the best cure in this instance is likely to be one of using some preventative

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In the Lower School, phones are locked away at the start of the day and returned to children at the end of the day. Phones are not permitted to be seen or heard on the School site from Year 7 through to Year 11 (there are slightly different permissions for Sixth Form students). Even so, we find ourselves supporting children and parents with the misuse of phones in their own time and we would therefore encourage you to think carefully about the choices you are making for your child over the next few months; what devices you are equipping them with, and what those choices will enable them to access. The School has an evolving approach to how we manage what can be a particularly pernicious challenge for all of us. It is a fast-moving debate, and I can certainly see additional changes or even an overhaul of our approach in the future. For the moment, Alleyn's allows smartphones, but I would not wish you to purchase an expensive item, the use of which we may have to restrict further in the relatively near future.

Instead, we would urge you to consider purchasing a 'dumb phone' for your child to bring to and from school; they do not need a smart phone for school. I try not to draw on my personal life, but I can speak as a parent of a Year 7 child who, on starting 'big school', was less than joyful at being presented with a Nokia 3310 which cannot access the internet or anything more addictive than 'snake'. There was a conversation, of course, and we said the following things:

- The most exciting thing that a phone brings is freedom - freedom to go on the bus to school, to go to Nandos (other restaurant chains are available) with your mates, to walk to the shop, to go to the park. You have all of that with this phone.

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- The most exciting thing that a phone brings is freedom - freedom to go on the bus to school, to go to Nandos (other restaurant chains are available) with your mates, to walk to the shop, to go to the park. You have all of that with this phone.
- Smart Phones make you vulnerable to the poor decisions of others – 'I trust you, I don't trust everyone else.'
- If you lose your phone or someone 'nicks' it – I'll be a bit grumpy but will be able to buy you a replacement.
- For everything potentially (and very fleetingly) cool you miss, there are 3 things you'll be glad you have nothing to do with.
- If people want you to come to their parties, they'll have to speak to you or make a special effort to invite you.
- You can wear this however you like – ashamed of your OTT Dad or like a kid who knows what really matters – be 'uncommon'. Either is fine, but you can blame me, and I'm good with that.
- It's not forever (16 is what we're shooting for).

Lots of schools around the country are now taking action...

01. **Twyford Church of
England High School, Acton** →

Students all sign a mandatory mobile phone agreement to use only a Nokia 105, Samsung E1200 or Alcatel 10.16G brick phone, which must be switched off in bags all day. If pupils are seen breaking the rule, teachers confiscate the phone till the end of term.



02. Emanuel School, *London*



As of this year, the school is advising parents of new Year 7 pupils joining in September to not buy a smartphone for their child until Year 9. Having run several 4-week trials where they asked pupils to limit social media to 1 hour per day, kids reported feeling happier, less lonely and having improved levels of concentration.



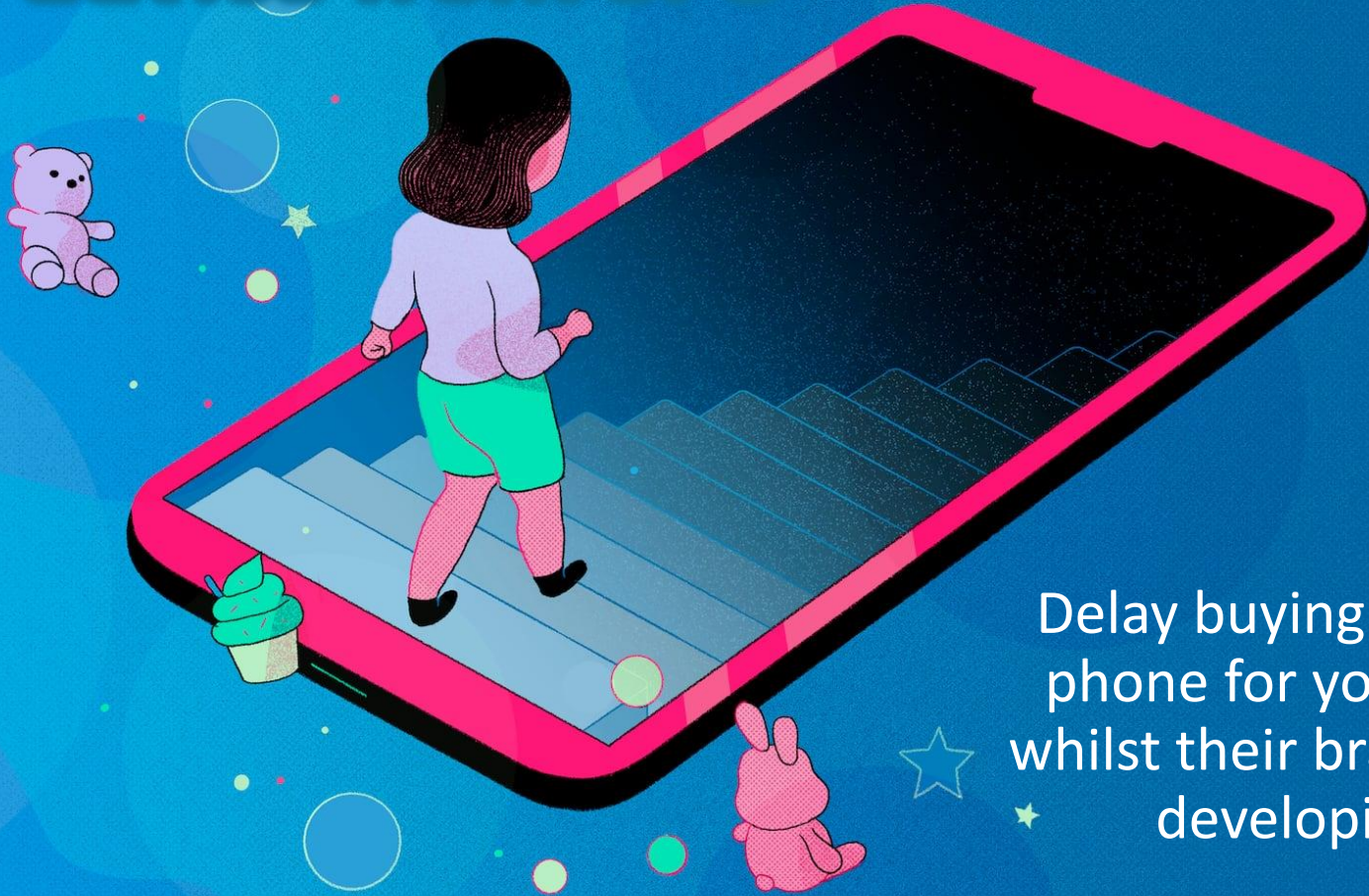
03. John Wallis Academy, *Kent*



In January, the school banned phones in school, meaning all devices must be locked into Yondr pouches for the whole school day. Teachers reported that pupils began playing tag and flirting in the school playground for the first time, instead of looking at their phones.



The advice from SFC



Delay buying a smart phone for your child whilst their brain is still developing.

The research recommends Year 9

01. Educate yourself about the issue

Before making any decisions, take some time to understand how smartphones can impact young people's mental health, sleep, and focus. Watching the Channel4 documentary [Swiped](#), on which Dr Chatterjee is the expert voice, is a great start.

02. Have open conversations

Talk openly with your child. Share your concerns, but also listen to how they feel. Explain that this decision is about supporting their health and future, not just enforcing rules. Honest conversations build trust and understanding.

03. Discuss the benefits of being smartphone-free

Help your child see the positives. Without a smartphone, they have more time for hobbies, spending quality time with friends, and building independence. Focus on what they'll gain, not what they're missing.

04. Offer alternatives

If they feel left out or are concerned about not having a particular app, consider letting them use it on a shared family device so you can keep an eye on what they're up to. Or get them a simple phone – there are loads of good options which enable them to keep in touch, without the potential risks of the internet or social media. Check out our guide to the best [simple](#) phones.

05. Sign a Parent Pact with others

The [Parent Pact](#) lets you join a community of like-minded parents waiting until at least Year 9 to get their child a smartphone. See how many others have signed in your child's school and year group, and connect with them via your regional Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group, to reduce the peer pressure.

If you have made the decision to buy your child a smartphone already, here are some useful tips.

Setting up filtering can help reduce inappropriate content.

There are three levels to doing this



**Your internet/wifi provider
(only works in your home)**



On the device itself



**Within the settings of
specific apps**

Entertainment & search engines

Select the stream
or other apps from

Social media

Select the social r
from the dropdo

Broadband & mobile networks

Select your network p
dropdown list:

Video games & consoles

Select the video game or console from
the dropdown list:



VIEW ALL

If you would like any help setting up parent controls, Internet Matters have sections that guide you through how to setup every type of phone or device imaginable. Each section has a drop down menu where you can find the device or provider you need.

Talk about it:

Tips for a meaningful conversation

- Start conversations when your children won't be embarrassed, for example in the car going home from school. **Try to de-personalise it by asking their opinion on a current news story** that relates to an online issue.
- **Be proactive - don't wait until something has already gone wrong** - discuss issues ahead of time - knowing what children of a similar age are doing will help you know more about the environment that your child is living in.
- **Ask them for advice on how to do something online** and use this as a conversation starter.
- Make sure they know they can come to you if they're upset by something they've seen online - **listen to them when they do and try not to overreact** - the important thing is that they have come and told you!
- **Be sensitive and praise them** when they share their online experiences with you.
- If your child comes to you with an issue, **stay calm and listen without judging them.**
- **Talk about online grooming as you would stranger danger** and explain that people they meet online might not be who they say they are.
- Ask them about things online which **might make them (or others) uncomfortable.**



Controlling tech time

And there are tactics you can put in place **to help manage** their screen time...

1 Set a good example

2 Talk together about the time spent online

3 Agree on appropriate length of time they can use their device

4 Get the whole family to unplug & create screen-free zones

5 Use technology/apps to help manage screen time e.g. Forest App



Controlling tech time

Your children will be watching the way you use technology and they will copy; make sure there is some consistency in how you **role model** good behaviour:

1 Turn off notifications on apps to avoid that constant 'ping'

2 Buy an alarm clock so you don't have devices in the bedrooms

3 Keep phone on silent in your pocket or bag when you pick the kids from school

4 'No phones at the table' rule or 'no phones between 6 and 7' rule

5 Family tech-free days!





Parents what's app
group to discuss the
SFC movement and
support each other.

West Bridgford Junior School
SFC Group

