





Dear Parents and Carers,





I would like to make you aware of a change to our mobile phone policy that will be introduced in September 2024. **From the beginning of the next academic year, children are not allowed to bring a smartphone to school.**

In our school, as in every school in the country, we are constantly having to deal with issues that are happening outside of school around children's use of social media. This ranges from children posting unkind comments which causes arguments and emotional distress to sharing inappropriate videos and images. This term I have even needed to involve the police in an incident involving the sharing of pornographic images. Scrolling through one of the Year 6 children's WhatsApp groups with their parent, it horrified me to see the sheer quantity of messages and groups they are in on this platform alone, let alone the content. Children of 10 and 11 years old or younger do not have the maturity to manage their use of social media appropriately, which is placing them at risk, and it needs to stop.

At Alban City School, we are supportive of the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign, with the aim of delaying the age that children are given a smartphone to 14. Our rationale for this is the research around the detrimental impact the use of smartphones can have on young children's physical and neurological development, their mental health and their safety. The images below are taken from the recent parent information meeting we held, and the presentation can be viewed in full on our website by clicking the link on our online safety page.

<https://albancityschool.org.uk/curriculum/esafety/>

<p>...creating structural changes to children's brains</p>  <p>FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES</p>	<p>...damaging children's eyes</p>  <p>PHYSICAL HEALTH</p>	<p>69% of children with a smartphone report neck pain. 81% displayed a neck disability.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>...affecting children's ability to focus</p>  <p>FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES</p>
<p>Excessive smartphone use is associated with psychiatric, cognitive, emotional, medical and brain changes</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>Children's myopia risk (shortsightedness) is linked to smartphone use.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>...damaging the development of children's spine</p>  <p>PHYSICAL HEALTH</p>	<p>Nearly 40% of children have experienced reduced levels of concentration due to their smartphones</p> <p>READ MORE</p>

<p>...addictive</p>  <p>FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGE</p>	<p>...contributing to the huge increase in cyberbullying</p>  <p>MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH</p>	<p>...encouraging children to turn to peers over parents for direction</p>  <p>SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>...exposing children to sexual abuse & grooming</p>  <p>SEXUAL CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR</p>
<p>46% of teens say they use the internet "almost constantly"</p> <p>23% of young people have a dysfunctional relationship with their smartphones</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>84% of bullying in children with smartphones, takes place online.</p> <p>Children no longer have respite from bullies at home.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>Peers are now children's primary attachment. Children are in almost constant contact with their peers shifting the primary relationships away from their parents/guardians</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>There has been a 1,058% increase since 2019 of webpages showing sexual abuse of 7-10 yr-old children</p> <p>READ MORE</p>

We are not seeking to ban children using phones, and indeed it is not our place as a school to do this. How your child uses a phone is your choice as their parent, and everyone will have a different view on this. Smartphones are fantastic devices, and as adults we could not manage without them. However, we are seeking to delay the age at which children are given their own smartphone, for all the reasons I have outlined above.

From September, children in Year 6 only may bring a 'brick phone' to school, but only for the reason that they are walking to and from school unaccompanied. The need to bring a phone for this reason must be confirmed in writing by their parent. Phones must be handed to the teacher on arrival, not kept in bags, and will be returned at the end of the day. No mobile phone use is permitted by children while they are in school, and children are not allowed to wear a smartwatch. Some examples of alternatives to smartphones and tracking tiles were shared in the parent meeting, but there are other makes and models available. (I'm not on commission from Nokia!)

I have held an assembly today to explain our approach to the children, and some children from Year 6 shared their experiences of how having their own smartphone has not been positive, and that these experiences could have been avoided if they didn't have one.

Last Friday we held our first parent forum where we discussed this issue. As an outcome of this meeting, we will be creating a family pact that will be displayed in the pupil entrance area. Parents are invited to sign it if they agree not to give their child a smartphone until they are at least 14. If enough families agree, the peer pressure for children to have a phone will no longer exist, and parents will find it much easier to say no and not worry that their child is missing out.

I will hold another parent forum next term, and parents from your child's class may reach out to you via the class WhatsApp groups to invite you to join the ongoing discussions. I appreciate this is a controversial topic and you may not agree with our approach, but please know that much consideration and research has gone into this, and our decisions are made with your children's best interests at heart.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Stray

Alternatives to Smartphones

Internet Free Phones

When you do want to get a phone for your child make sure:

- **The phone does not support WI-FI**
- No 4G/5G
- No selfie camera
- **Use a SIM card with NO DATA**, calls and texts only
- Give it with a contract/boundaries (see below)

Sim Cards:

IMPORTANT – When you get a SIM card for your child's phone, make sure that it has NO DATA roaming, only calls and texts so that there is no chance that they can access the internet. Currently Asda are the only company that are offering this.

[Asda Unlimited calls and Texts £4 per month](#)



[Nokia 5710 Express Audio](#) – £75



[Nokia 105](#) – £25



[Nokia 3310](#) – £60

Tracking devices

Many parents want to be able to track them for safety and peace of mind. If you are getting them a phone from the list above, these will not come with tracking devices so if this is something you want you can get a tracking sticker to attach directly onto the phone.



[Tile](#) – £25



[Apple Airtag](#) – £30



[Karri.io](#) - £25