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Dear Parents/Carers,

In recent months there has been growing awareness of the harmful effects of smartphones on young people's well-being. New research has received extensive media coverage and thousands of parents have joined national campaigns such as [Smartphone Free Childhood](#), in a bid to delay giving smartphones to their children.

Many parents and carers have joined the Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group and have signed the Smartphone Free Childhood Parent Pledge to delay giving their child(ren) a smartphone until at least the end of year 9.

The problem

When we first started giving smartphones to children, we didn't understand their impact. Now, there is a growing body of evidence linking smartphone use with [an array of harms](#). Smartphones are correlated with anxiety, depression and loneliness. They are a gateway to extreme content and unwanted communication. Research shows that smartphones affect academic performance and many children show signs of behavioural addiction to their devices.

In school, staff are spending a considerable amount of time investigating issues that arise outside school where smartphones and online concerns take place. This is taking them away from other activities and meaning they are unable to focus more of their time on supporting children's learning.

We urge every parent to look at the [latest evidence](#) of the negative impact smartphones are having on children. This [powerful short film](#) gives a good summary of the problem. For a longer watch, [this talk](#) from the Psychologist Jonathan Haidt gives a more detailed rundown of the evidence and is a powerful watch.

Underpinning all these harms is one that is potentially the most significant of all. Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world. The average UK 12-year-old now spends [29 hours a week](#) – equivalent to a part-time job – on their smartphone. This leaves little time for the real world activities and relationships that enable us to learn the essential life skills needed for the transition to adulthood.

It is not surprising that new research shows that the younger a child receives their first smartphone, [the worse their mental health](#). And yet, the age children are getting their first smartphone is getting younger and younger. In the UK, a fifth of 3-4 year olds own their own device and [24% of 5-7 year-olds](#) do.

The solution

We understand that many parents don't want to give their child a smartphone but feel they have no choice because everyone else is. No parent wants to isolate their child from their peer group. The solution to this problem lies in better regulation of the tech industry, but enacting legislation takes years – time that this generation of children don't have. Meanwhile our most powerful defence lies in taking collective action at school and at home.

Therefore, we strongly encourage parents to resist the pressure from your children and their peers, and hold back on giving your children smartphones until **at least the end of year 9**. If we all work together, social pressure is removed, and no child is the odd one out.

In school, children are not allowed phones in class and we would strongly discourage children from bringing mobiles to school. Parents are able to contact school via the school office and we will always support children after school if they need to contact parents so children have no need for a phone in school.

Our children's futures are so important, to you and to us. In a world where fast-changing and unregulated technology is actually impacting the development of our children's brains, it is up to us to stand up for them, and their futures.

We hope you will consider this information carefully and support your child by restricting their access to a smartphone.

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Tee

Mr J Tee
Headteacher