



St Nicolas CofE Academy

Smartphone Free School Policy

Reviewed: September 2026

Ratified by full Governors:

To be reviewed: September 2027



Purpose

At St Nicolas CE Academy, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing and distraction-free environment where all children can flourish academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations regarding the use of mobile phones and smart devices and to ensure a safe, focused and conducive learning environment for all pupils.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils attending St Nicolas CE Academy.
- Parents and carers.
- Staff members.
- Governors.
- Volunteers.
- Visitors and contractors.
- All school activities, including educational visits, sporting events and residential experiences.

Policy Aims

This policy seeks to allow all pupils to flourish by:

- Maintaining high standards of teaching and learning through distraction-free environments.
- Promoting positive face-to-face relationships and social interaction.
- Supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing.
- Reducing the risks associated with social media, online communication and excessive screen use.
- Ensuring the highest possible standards of safeguarding.
- Creating a safe and respectful learning environment for everyone.
- Supporting families in making their own decisions regarding when it is appropriate for their child to access smartphone technology.

Policy Statements

1. St Nicolas CE Academy is a Smartphone-Free School.
2. The school makes a clear distinction between:
 - Simple mobile phones (without internet access, camera capability or recording functions); and
 - Smartphones and other smart devices (devices with internet access or the potential for internet access).
3. Pupils are prohibited from bringing smartphones and smart devices into school.



4. The policy supports safeguarding, health and wellbeing by reducing risks associated with internet-enabled devices.
5. The policy supports parents and carers in determining when smartphone ownership is appropriate for their child.
6. Significant consequences may be applied when prohibited devices are brought onto the school site.

For the purpose of this policy, a smart device includes:

- Smartphones
- Smartwatches
- Tablets
- Internet-enabled gaming devices
- E-readers with internet capability
- Any device capable of accessing the internet
- Devices capable of photography, filming or audio recording

Rationale

At St Nicolas CE Academy, we recognise the importance of digital technology in today's society. However, we also acknowledge growing concerns regarding the impact of smartphones and connected devices on pupils' wellbeing, learning, behaviour and safety.

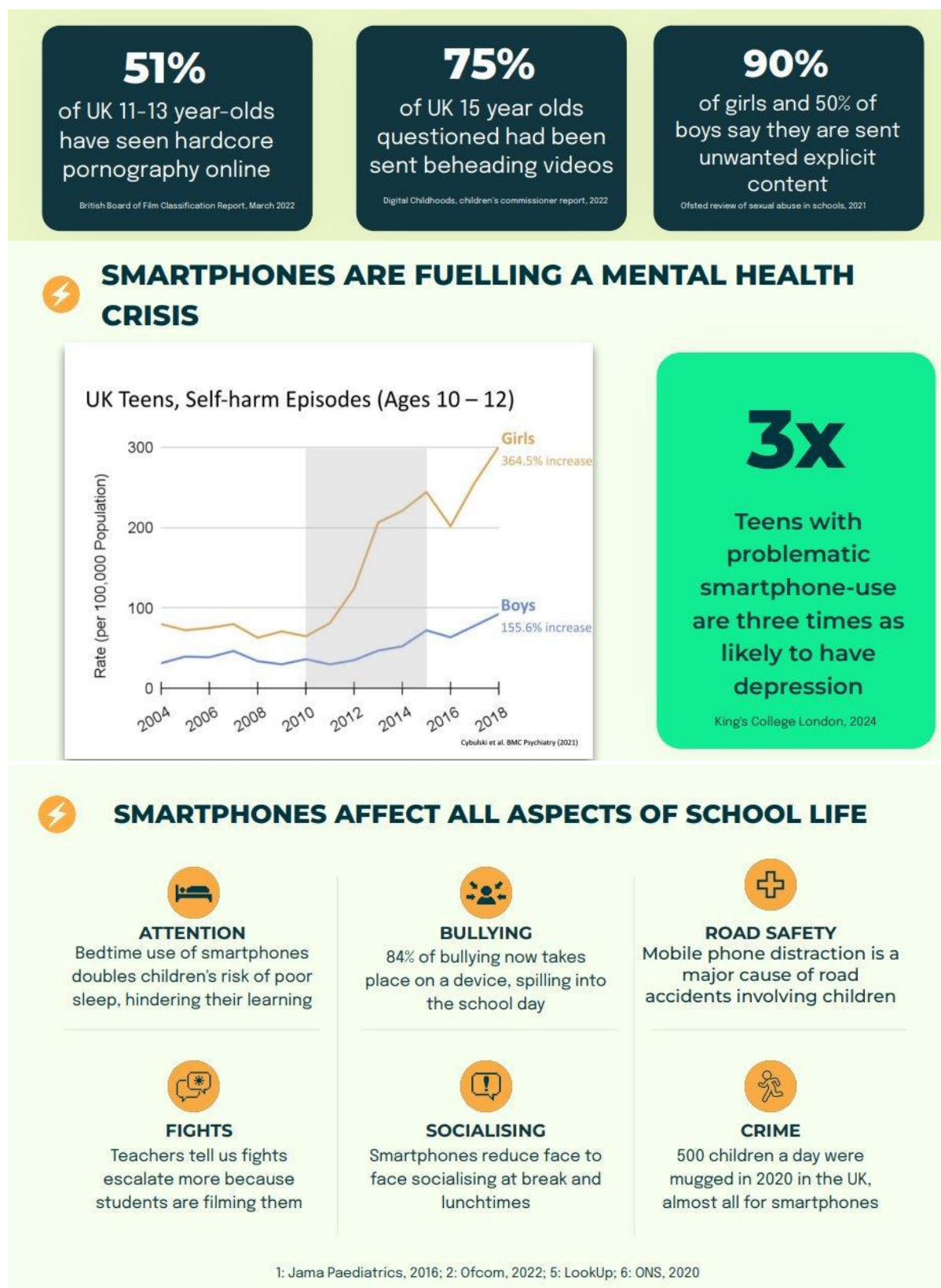
As a Church of England school, we are committed to creating a safe, nurturing and respectful environment in which every child can flourish.

This Smartphone-Free Policy has been introduced to:

- Eliminate distractions during learning.
- Improve concentration and engagement.
- Promote healthy social interaction.
- Reduce cyberbullying and online conflict.
- Protect children from inappropriate content.
- Minimise safeguarding risks associated with photography, filming and social media.
- Support healthy childhood development and positive digital habits.

Research and national guidance increasingly highlight concerns regarding:

- Device dependency and addictive behaviours.
- Excessive social media use.
- Anxiety and mental health concerns linked to online activity.
- Exposure to inappropriate content.
- Online grooming.
- Cyberbullying.
- Sharing of indecent or inappropriate images.
- Unauthorised photography and recording.



The school has a responsibility to safeguard pupils throughout the school day. That responsibility is significantly enhanced when internet-enabled devices are not present on site.



Ensuring the Safe and Appropriate Use of Mobile Phones by Pupils

St Nicolas CE Academy is a Smartphone-Free Zone.

Pupils must not bring smartphones, smartwatches with communication or recording capabilities, tablets or any other personal recording devices onto the school site.

If a smartphone or prohibited device is brought into school:

- The device will be confiscated and stored securely.
- It may only be collected by a parent or carer at the end of the confiscation period.
- Parents/carers will be asked to sign to acknowledge collection.

Exception for Years 5 and 6

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 who travel independently to and from school may bring a basic mobile phone (often referred to as a "brick phone") if it is necessary for their personal safety and communication with parents or carers.

These phones must:

- Have no internet access, camera or recording functionality.
- Be switched off before entering the school grounds.
- Be handed to a school adult immediately upon arrival.
- Remain securely stored until the end of the school day.

Recommended examples include:



Nokia 105



Samsung E1200



Alcatel 10.16G

The school does not require families to purchase any mobile phone. These examples are offered as guidance only. Any non-compliant device will be treated as a prohibited device under this policy. The Headteacher retains the final decision regarding whether a device meets policy requirements.

GPS Tracking Devices

Parents wishing to monitor their child's journey may use simple tracking devices such as:

- Apple AirTags
- Tile trackers



- Similar GPS tracking devices

These devices are permitted provided they do not offer communication, internet access, camera or recording functionality

Reasonable Adjustments and Exemptions

The school recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will consider reasonable adjustments on an individual basis.

Reasonable adjustments may be considered for pupils with:

- Medical needs.
- Disabilities.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Other exceptional safeguarding circumstances.

Requests for exemption must be made in writing and supported, where appropriate, by relevant evidence from parents, healthcare professionals, external agencies or other suitably qualified professionals.

Any exemption will be considered by the Headteacher on a case-by-case basis. In reaching a decision, the Headteacher will consider:

- Whether there is a genuine and evidenced need for access to a device with internet capability.
- The pupil's medical, educational, disability-related or safeguarding needs.
- Whether alternative arrangements could meet the identified need without requiring access to a personal smartphone.
- The school's statutory duties, including safeguarding and equality obligations.
- The impact on the safety, wellbeing and education of the pupil and others.

Only the Headteacher may authorise a pupil to possess a device with internet capability on school premises. The Headteacher's decision will be based on the individual circumstances presented and the evidence provided. Any agreed exemption may be subject to conditions and will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains necessary and appropriate.

Educational Visits and Residentials

This policy applies to:

- Educational visits.
- Sporting fixtures.
- Residential visits.
- Any off-site learning activities.



Where communication with families is required, staff will facilitate contact using school-approved devices. Pupils permitted to carry approved simple phones will be required to hand them to staff during residential visits, especially overnight, to ensure pupil safety and wellbeing.

Searching for Devices

There may be occasions when authorised staff need to search pupils' belongings where there is reasonable suspicion that a prohibited item is present.

Any search will be conducted in accordance with:

- Department for Education guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation.
- The school's Behaviour Policy.
- Safeguarding procedures.

During a search:

- Any prohibited device found will be confiscated.
- Any approved device being used contrary to policy may also be confiscated.

Consequences

A device will be confiscated if:

- It is seen on school premises.
- It rings, vibrates or makes a sound during the school day.
- It is used on school grounds.
- It is discovered during a search.
- It is found not to comply with this policy.

Approved Simple Phones

Where an approved simple phone has been used contrary to policy:

- The phone will be confiscated.
- Parents/carers will be contacted.
- The phone will be returned only to a parent or carer.

Prohibited Smartphones or Smart Devices

Where a prohibited smartphone or smart device is found:

- The device will be confiscated for the following two weeks.
- Parents/carers will be informed.
- The device will be securely stored and returned to a parent or carer following a meeting with school leaders.



A pupil who refuses to surrender a device when requested may face further sanctions in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Ensuring the Safe and Appropriate Use of Mobile Phones by Volunteers, Visitors and Contractors

All volunteers, visitors and contractors are informed that St Nicolas CE Academy operates as a Smartphone-Free Zone.

Visitors should:

- Switch off or silence their mobile devices upon entering the school.
- Keep mobile phones out of sight during their visit.
- Use the school office telephone if an emergency call is required.

If a visitor needs to remain contactable due to exceptional circumstances, such as a family emergency or urgent professional matter, prior permission must be obtained from the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Visitors, volunteers and contractors must not:

- Take photographs, videos or audio recordings of pupils.
- Use personal devices to access or store images of children.
- Share any information relating to pupils through personal devices.

Volunteers accompanying educational visits or school trips must not use personal mobile phones whilst supervising children unless specifically authorised by the trip leader in an emergency.

Ensuring the Safe and Appropriate Use of Mobile Phones by Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are requested not to use smartphones or other recording devices whilst on school premises.

If a member of staff observes a parent or carer using a mobile phone inappropriately on the school site, they will politely request that the device is put away.

Exceptions may be made during special events such as:

- School performances
- Concerts
- Sports Day
- Celebration events
- Nativity productions



Where parental filming or photography is permitted, parents and carers are reminded that:

- Images and videos should be for personal family use only.
- Photos or videos containing other children should not be shared on social media without appropriate consent.
- The school must be informed immediately if any safeguarding concerns arise regarding the use or sharing of images.

The school reserves the right to restrict photography or filming at any event where safeguarding considerations require it.

Ensuring the Safe and Appropriate Use of Mobile Phones by Staff

St Nicolas CE Academy recognises that staff may need access to mobile phones during the working day.

However, staff must ensure that personal devices do not interfere with their professional responsibilities or compromise safeguarding.

Staff must:

- Store personal mobile phones securely in lockers, cupboards, drawers or designated staff areas during working hours.
- Ensure phones are on silent mode whilst on site.
- Only use personal phones in staff-only areas and during authorised break times.
- Never use personal phones when children are present unless authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances.

This expectation applies at all times, including:

- Educational visits
- Sporting events
- Swimming lessons
- Off-site learning activities

Staff must never:

- Use personal devices to photograph, film or record pupils.
- Store pupil information on personal devices.
- Communicate with pupils through personal social media accounts, messaging services or personal phone numbers.
-

All photography and video recording of pupils must be carried out using school-approved equipment in accordance with the school's safeguarding and data protection procedures.

For further guidance, staff should refer to the:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy



- Data Protection Policy

Monitoring and Compliance

All staff are expected to follow the procedures outlined in this policy and in related safeguarding documentation.

Staff are also expected to promote and uphold the school's smartphone-free expectations and ensure that pupils, visitors, volunteers, contractors, parents and carers adhere to the requirements of this policy.

Any concerns regarding the inappropriate use of mobile phones or other personal digital devices should be reported immediately to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and the Academy Governance Committee to ensure it remains effective, reflects current safeguarding guidance and supports the wellbeing and learning of all pupils.

Policy adopted by: St Nicolas CE Academy Governance Committee

Review frequency: Annually

Next review date: _____

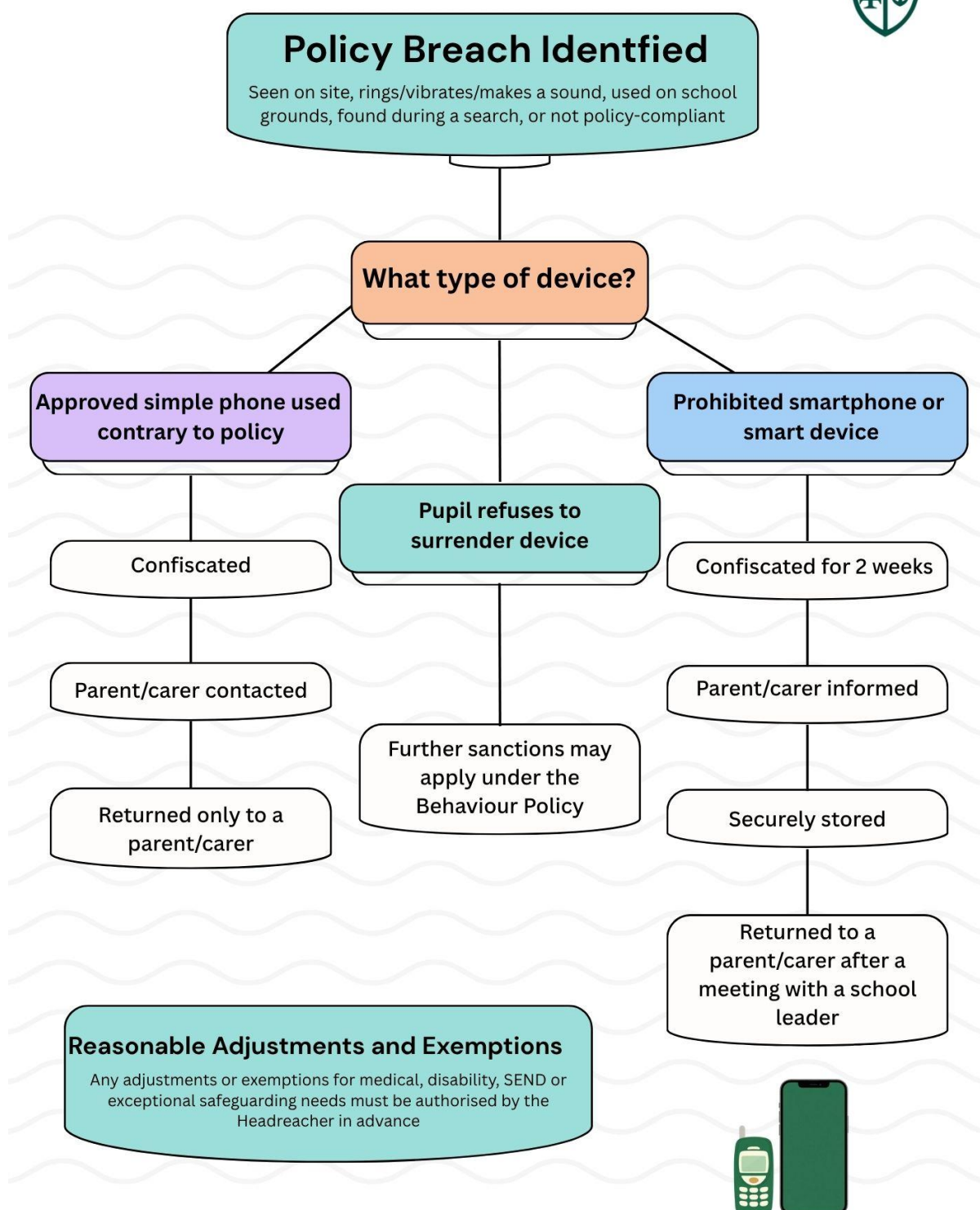
Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____



Appendix 1- Consequence Flow Chart

Consequence Flow Chart





Appendix 2- Smartphone Free School

Frequently Asked Questions

How other schools across the UK have successfully implemented a 'simple phones only' policy and addressed common concerns

Do schools have a legal right to keep a child's phone?

Yes, the DfE guidance allows schools to confiscate property. As part of the consultation process, we have spoken to our local police team they have confirmed we have a legal right to do so and that they support our right to confiscate property as this is a civil matter and supported by DfE guidance. Ofsted supports schools' rights to confiscation of banned items in line with the DfE guidance. Link to the DfE documentation [Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#)

How can I contact my child if they do not have a smartphone?

There will be no change during school hours, as students are not permitted to use mobile phones during this time. If communication is required, it should be directed through the school office, as per existing protocols. Importantly, this is not a total ban on mobile phones. If you feel it is necessary for your Year 5/Year 6 child to have a means of communication during their journey to and from school, a basic (non-smart) phone enables this while avoiding the risks associated with smartphone use. This approach supports a safer and more focused school environment by reducing exposure to potential harms from both their own and others' smartphones.

What if I want to track my child's journey?

There are basic tracking solutions available that do not involve smartphones. Devices such as Apple AirTags or similar alternatives allow parents and carers to monitor a child's location at school and to and from school without providing internet access, camera facility or social media exposure.

My child's smartphone has parental controls - isn't that safe enough?

While parental controls can be helpful, they are not foolproof. A recent Parentkind poll revealed that 47% of children with parental controls had managed to bypass them. Schools cannot verify or monitor the settings on every student's device and must consider broader risks, including exposure to appropriate content via other students' phones, being photographed or filmed without consent at school and having the content shared or uploaded to the internet. Smartphones are designed to be engaging and, in many cases, addictive. With children receiving hundreds of notifications daily, it is unrealistic to expect parents and carers to monitor all activity. Even if parental controls were watertight it is impossible to guarantee every smartphone is adequately locked down. Every child is



only as safe as the least safe phone. A smartphone-free school environment minimizes these risks and helps protect children's mental well-being and development.

Do I have to buy a simple phone?

No, there is no obligation to provide your child with any phone. However, if you wish to maintain communication with your child outside school hours, a simple mobile phone is an affordable option. These devices typically cost between £15–£50 new, and under £10 second-hand. Pay-as-you-go SIM cards are often free, and contracts offering unlimited calls and texts can be found for as little as £3–£4 per month. As they do not use mobile data, ongoing costs remain low.

What if my child has a medical or SEND need?

If there are exceptional circumstances that necessitate your child having access to a phone during the school day, please contact the school directly to discuss appropriate arrangements.

Can parents decide when their child gets a smartphone?

Absolutely. Parents and carers know their children best and should make decisions about smartphone use based on their own judgment. A smartphone free school policy supports this by maintaining a neutral environment. Parents and carers who feel their child is ready for a smartphone can introduce one at home, while those who feel their child is not yet emotionally prepared can send them to school with the confidence that they won't be exposed to inappropriate content or peer pressure from other students' devices or be photographed or filmed without consent. This approach not only helps to safeguard children at school, it helps level the playing field, reducing social pressure and preventing any student from feeling excluded—whether they have a smartphone or not.

Do we not need to teach children responsible use of technology to equip them for the digital world?

Research suggests smartphone use does not automatically translate into digital literacy. The challenge is protecting children from addiction, exposure to extreme content and the enormous opportunity cost while their brains are still developing. As a school that supports the Smartphone Free Childhood initiative we are not anti-technology but pro-childhood.