



SMARTPHONE FREE AT KS1, 2 & 3

March 2025

Let's keep talking about smartphones and the impact they have on our children.

Continuing from our launch last month, we are actively working with our professional partners in education, parents and students to further support and explore the need to return our children to a play-based childhood, rather than a phone-based one.

One thing we want to continue to highlight: your son or daughter will not need a smartphone to access any of the websites or apps that are used at KS3 (Year 7 - 9). We have carefully audited our curriculum and have checked that all the systems we use can be accessed via a computer or through parents' phones on their child's behalf.

What is the problem with kids and smartphones?

A useful place to begin is exploring the **Smartphone Free Childhood** website and campaign. When children first started getting smartphones a decade ago, there was no research about their impact. Now there is, and it's overwhelming. Exposing children to things their brains aren't yet developed enough to deal with can cause a whole host of problems, from triggering anxiety and eating disorders, to opening the door to cyberbullying or sexual predators, according to the latest research.

As parents and carers, we need to ask ourselves about how we support our children when managing the online technology that we have given them.

Let's ask:

- Where are the devices charging at night?
- What apps do my children have access to and how do they use them?
- When was the last time I checked what my son or daughter is doing online?
- How long is their daily screen time?

“When we give our children access to the whole world in their pocket, we give the whole world access to our children.”

Mrs Sally Lees, Assistant Head & Designated Safeguarding Lead
sal@bournside.gloucs.sch.uk

Up next: Next week, we will share details of our Term 5 Smartphone Free Challenge how you can get involved.

www.bournside.gloucs.sch.uk/school-information/smartphone-free-at-ks1-2-and-3/

Kids & smartphones – what’s the big deal?

When children first started getting smartphones a decade ago, there was no research about their impact. Now there is, and it’s overwhelming.



HARMFUL CONTENT

Smartphones act as a gateway to pornography, violent and extreme content. Often kids don't seek them out but are exposed to them via algorithms and messaging apps. Once seen, these things can never be unseen. 90% of girls and 50% of boys say they're sent explicit content they didn't want to see.



ADDICTION

Tech companies intentionally make apps addictive, because the more time we spend, the more data they harvest, the more money they make. By leveraging dopamine circuits, they trigger brain responses akin to slot machine gambling. 1 in 4 young adults show signs of behavioural addiction to smartphones.



ACADEMIC DISTRACTION

The average teen receives 237 smartphone notifications a day – one every few minutes – making focusing on schoolwork hard. Studies show that excessive smartphone use has negative impacts on academic performance. Children at schools with effective smartphone bans get GCSE's 1-2 grades higher.



GROOMING

Sites like TikTok, Snapchat and Roblox are used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones, blackmailing them into sharing sexual content. Sextortion is now the fastest growing crime against teens. Since 2022, there has been a 66% rise in 'self generated' sexual abuse imagery of children under 10.



CYBERBULLYING

Disagreements between pupils used to stop at the school gate, now they follow kids wherever they go, 24/7. Young people who experience cyberbullying are twice as likely to attempt suicide and self-harm. One in six teens report being cyberbullied in the past month, according to the World Health Organisation.



MENTAL ILLNESS

Rates of depression, anxiety and suicide in young people have spiked globally since 2010, when children first began getting smartphones. The first generation to grow up with smartphones are now adults – data shows that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.



OPPORTUNITY COST

Underpinning all these harms is one that is potentially the most significant of all. For the first time in human history, children are spending more time on devices than they are playing – an activity crucial to our healthy development. 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 we need to transition into adulthood. The average daily time that teens spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010.

Join the grassroots parents movement to protect childhood from Big Tech

www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/join

For all links to stats references see www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/the-problem